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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Sato Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu.

Mr. Kilman (Vanuatu): Today, we stand on the verge of global uncertainty. The international landscape is scarred by wars, conflict, civil unrest, epidemics, drought and famine. Poverty and malnutrition continue to ravage the lives of millions of the world's inhabitants.

The very values and fabric on which the United Nations was founded are being besieged by new ideas and principles that are undermining the authority of this body to maintain global peace and security. The clash of ideologies and of cultural and religious differences continues to give much food for thought. The United Nations stands at a crossroads. While it has the mandate to address those challenges, it remains paralysed as a result of actions taken by the hegemonic Powers of today. That is the dilemma confronting the Organization.

The value of the human person and his or her right to live in a world that is fair and just seems but a dream. Ensuring the dignity of one's right to live with access to the most basic necessities in life remains our greatest challenge. We speak so ambitiously of creating a world that is equitable and just, but the outcomes have been unimpressive.

The schism between the minority rich and the majority poor continues to grow. The multitudes of the disadvantaged are being further marginalized from the so-called benefits of globalization. Fear has struck many small countries of the developing world. It is not the fear that the developing world has no capabilities in contributing to peace and security, but the fear — the greatest fear, in fact — that the undemocratic practices of the major United Nations organs, such as the Security Council, are causing tension and disarray in the work of the United Nations.

The disparities in the quality of life between the haves and the have-nots have grown to be fertile breeding grounds for new and hostile generations. And it is here that the phenomenon of terrorism continues to challenge the frontiers of our imagination. It is perhaps much clearer today than ever before that there are reasons for increased resentment in certain parts of the world.

My Government condemns terrorism in whatever form or manifestation it assumes, and there is an urgent need for all the Members of the United Nations to work together openly in combating those dangerous developments. The destruction of innocent lives should not be the means to meeting an end. That is inhuman. All United Nations Member countries therefore have the responsibility — a moral and ethical responsibility — to eradicate that menace from the face of the Earth.

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Peace cannot be won through injustice, the practice of double standards, aggression or war. We cannot be victorious in the fight against terrorism if we fail to address its root causes. Conversely, it is incumbent on all Member States to act responsibly to ensure the implementation of all United Nations resolutions. Moreover, if we are to have any hope of building a better future, then peace must sometimes come at a price.

We must begin to look deeply, honestly and with open hearts if we are really to understand the world around us. If there is a question of repressive policies that influence and dominate the international economic and political order, then those concerned must take remedial action. The adoption of the resolution on the United Nation's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is therefore a positive step forward.

The central focus on the fight against terrorism has taken centre stage for some, and the diversion of resources is jeopardizing the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and official development assistance target levels. Accessibility to the markets of the affluent nations has also restricted the progress of development in many countries of the developing world. Major world players must not lose sight of those goals.

Inter-State relations, mutual understanding and tolerance begin with respect for the individual. The dignity of the human person is of the essence in building equality between all persons. That is one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations. As Members of the United Nations, we have all agreed to embrace those principles and we continue to believe in those values. Vanuatu joined the United Nations in 1981 because it believed in the Organization. Today, I stand before the Assembly to again reaffirm faith in the United Nations, but I agree that changes must take place to adapt the United Nations system to the evolution of the international and geopolitical and economic framework.

Reforms of the various United Nations bodies are therefore absolutely essential. There must be reform of the Security Council to ensure that it is democratic and more representative of the United Nations membership. The veto power in the Council dilutes all the good intentions of the majority of the United Nations membership towards addressing many of the challenges confronting us today. The underlying question, though, is: Has the disproportionate use of the veto power sustained reasonable levels of international peace and stability?

Cultural and religious differences cannot be seen to be obstacles in that regard. The United Nations brought civility and etiquette to the conduct of relations between States, and central to that are relations between individuals. The art of statesmanship has therefore become very critical at this time. Respect must therefore begin here at the United Nations. When one world Power speaks here, this Hall is jammed. Thereafter, the debate becomes routine. That is remiss of many of us. The annual general debate of the General Assembly is the only practical occasion at which almost all leaders are together in one place to discuss and share views on the development challenges facing the globe. The United Nations is not about one or several nations; it is about this family of nations with the one common objective of maintaining international peace and security.

Over the past few days, millions around the globe have monitored the unfolding debate in this noble Hall of the General Assembly. A war of words has resounded from this rostrum, exposing an alarming rift in relations between some super-Powers and the voices of the developing world. The media have exploited the situation to scrutinize those events, often ending up with gross assumptions and conclusions that have only instilled fear amongst the world's innocent population. Now, is that the right message of hope we are giving to our peoples, who have faith in the United Nations? Is the United Nations not the beacon of hope for all humanity?

Confrontation must be resolved through tactful diplomacy and negotiation consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and established international law. In that spirit, we also appeal to those concerned to exercise great restraint and to have the wisdom and responsibility to ensure above all that any action they take serves that purpose, which must be in the interest of future global justice, peace and security. Any retreat from multilateralism will result only in increased tension and aggression. Again, mutual dialogue through appropriate mechanisms is absolutely critical at this very delicate time.

On the question of the Middle East, both Israel and Palestine have the right to live side by side in

peaceful coexistence as independent and sovereign States. The international community must be realistic about the future. Let us allow justice, security and long-lasting peace to prevail for both the Israeli people and the Palestinians.

Recently, Vanuatu was recognized by the Happy Planet Index, published by the British-based New Economics Foundation, as the happiest place on Earth. We are proud to have been placed so high amongst all countries of the world, but we have been careful not to be carried away, and so often it is that island paradox that conceals the diverse development challenges that small island countries of the Pacific, such as Vanuatu, face in today's world of globalization.

Last week, during the High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, I spoke of the many challenges facing my country in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. Vanuatu has been showing positive signs of gradual economic growth. However, in the light of our vulnerability to natural disasters, exogenous market demand and supply price fluctuations and their adverse impacts on the three most important sectors contributing to our gross domestic product, we consider this an inappropriate time to include Vanuatu in the list of countries eligible for graduation.

Furthermore, while the current methods used to measure the three main thresholds for graduation are dependent on statistical variables, it is commonly understood that statistical data for countries in the Pacific — including Vanuatu — contain major discrepancies. Therefore, relying solely on such data to determine Vanuatu's achievements in relation to the thresholds would yield inaccurate results.

Very soon, the General Assembly will be considering countries recommended for inclusion in the list of countries eligible for graduation. That list includes Vanuatu. Our arguments for exclusion from the list are well founded and based on practical realities. My Government considers as premature the recommendation by the Committee for Development Policy to include Vanuatu on the list. We therefore call upon Members of the United Nations to understand and support Vanuatu's case.

As a responsible United Nations Member, Vanuatu is also contributing towards international peace and security. Vanuatu peacekeepers have participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and East Timor, and we currently have peacekeepers stationed in the Congo, Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan. Vanuatu has also participated in regional peacekeeping missions in Bougainville and Solomon Islands. Those efforts illustrate Vanuatu's resolve to engage in peacekeeping and peacebuilding in both the regional and international contexts.

With regard to the question of the environment — in particular global warming and climate change — my Government strongly aligns itself with other small island States in urging the international community to reduce emissions. The failure of major emitters to sign the Kyoto Protocol is a major disappointment.

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. It calls for recognition of and respect for the fundamental rights of peoples and territories still under colonial rule. We must not lose sight of that goal. The United Nations must make renewed efforts where it has failed to allow justice to prevail for those peoples who continue to be denied their inalienable right to freedom and democracy. We must relegate that dark legacy to the past.

Determining how to bring more cohesiveness and unity to this great community of nations has now become a much more formidable challenge. I affirm my support for the challenging exercise before us. Our Almighty Creator entrusted us, the human race, with the safeguarding of a great asset, the Earth. It is incumbent on us to make the most of that opportunity. The world's destiny is in our hands. In that spirit, I extend my congratulations to Montenegro on its admission as the 192nd Member of the United Nations.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the support of our development partners — in particular Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America and the European Union — as well as the various United Nations bodies that are strongly supporting the development of Vanuatu. I also extend our appreciation to India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia for their continuous support within the framework of South-South cooperation. In addition, my Government is encouraged by the initiative and the kind gesture of Venezuela in committing $2 million to the Pacific

islands through the work programme of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Those are positive developments that together are complementing the leadership role being played by my Government in its development path.

In closing, I take this final opportunity to pay our respects to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his outstanding stewardship of the United Nations. His wisdom has ensured that the United Nations will retain its credibility and its relevance. During periods of turbulence and uncertainty, he has been relentless in the pursuit of his belief in United Nations reform. My Government salutes him for his distinguished service to the United Nations. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kaliopate Tavola, Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Sugar of Fiji.

Mr. Tavola (Fiji): I extend to you, Madam, the congratulations and best wishes of the Government and the people of the Fiji Islands. The General Assembly is to be commended for accepting your candidature to become the third woman to assume the post of President of the Assembly. That recognizes the critical role that women play in the development of humanity in our global village. We assure you of the support of my Government during your tenure.

We also extend our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his tireless efforts in the United Nations reform process, to which he has applied his personal skills and knowledge. While much is still to be resolved, his contributions thus far to the reform process have started the ball rolling. It is up to us to maintain the momentum.

Fiji, its Government and its people wish to honour and express our appreciation to the outgoing Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. His tireless efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in the world are well recognized. Ghana should be justly proud of its son. As a nation of the developing world, we are just as proud that he has been able to project our hopes — most prominently, in the development agenda of the Organization. We respect his achievements in leading the United Nations during his tenure of office. His service to peoples around the world, and the patience, courage and determination that he has demonstrated daily in facing the world, despite the barbs and criticisms thrown his way, are commendable. We ask him to accept our deepest gratitude and profound appreciation for all that he has done. We extend best wishes for the future to him and to his family.

On this occasion, following our successful general elections held in May of this year, I am pleased to be able to report to the Assembly that all international observers who attended the holding of the general elections in Fiji have concluded that the result was democratic and a fair reflection of the popular will of the people.

The rebuilding of our nation after the disaster that struck us in 2000 is going very well indeed. It was strengthened following the formation of the multiparty Government in accordance with the requirements of our Constitution. We now have a Cabinet comprising ministers drawn from the majority Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) Party and the Fiji Labour Party, as the party that qualified to be invited to be represented in Cabinet. We also have ministers drawn from the independent members of our elected House of Representatives. This means that, for the first time in its history, Fiji has a cabinet that is truly representative of its multi-ethnic communities.

Ministers from the two major races in the country and those from the minority groups are working well together in collaborative and consultative decision-making. We are united by the common purpose of taking our country forward, for the benefit of every citizen.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This multi-ethnic arrangement for good governance has received overwhelming approval and support from all our communities. It has given our country reasons to be optimistic. People from all races now feel more confident and secure about their future. We believe that forming a multi-ethnic Government that is representative of our different communities, and making it work, is the approach that has eluded us for a long time, but one which will ensure long-term peace and stability in Fiji. That new form of inclusive Government is also underpinning our drive for continued improvements in Fiji's economic performance.

The plea from Fiji is for the United Nations Member countries to strengthen their joint resolve to

oppose terrorism everywhere in the world. Fiji is committed to a world in which peace and prosperity are the cornerstones of all societies and communities. We consider it an honour to serve the cause of peace under the banners of the United Nations and other peacekeeping arrangements, including that under the Pacific Islands Forum.

Where there are potential internal crises and disorder, we support the Secretary-General's concept of conflict prevention. However, where the United Nations mandates intervention for peace, we are ready to contribute. Peacekeeping personnel from Fiji are working in Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, the Sinai, the Solomon Islands, the Sudan and Timor-Leste. We would like to thank the United Nations and all those countries that have assisted Fiji in honouring its commitment to international peace and security. We welcome the intention of other countries to assist us in that matter. We do so with humility, knowing that there is more peace to keep and to build in the world today, and that we have acquired competence to offer to humanity.

Peace and security initiatives have undergone a number of reviews recently to benefit peacekeeping operations. Fiji notes the creation of the peace stabilization force in Lebanon and the consultative process that preceded it as an example of an existing organization's being tailored to suit a given situation. We should not be afraid to make changes for the better. The best practices derived from Bougainville and the Solomon Islands are examples that can be utilized elsewhere.

The Peacebuilding Commission was established primarily to ensure that countries that have emerged from conflict do not regress to their status quo ante. Fiji commends that initiative and appeals for everyone's support. I welcome the support given to Fiji as an inaugural member of the Peacebuilding Commission.

We in the Pacific remain committed to ensuring that our region remains one of permanent peace and stability. Next month, Fiji will host the meeting of the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum. The finalization of the Pacific Plan will be the main focus of the meeting. The Plan provides a framework for cooperation and mutual assistance in development, good governance and long-term peace and security. We commend those countries from outside our region that have pledged to work and to assist us in the implementation of the Plan.

The Pacific Islands Forum leaders welcomed their summit meetings earlier this year with China, Japan and France. We commend them for their development support and their leadership in promoting lasting peace in the region. We maintain that those initiatives ought to be sustained and can be ensured by engaging all parties in constructive dialogue.

The United Nations is renowned for addressing and finding resolutions for the problems of the small and marginalized. Fiji is a small island developing State with a highly vulnerable economy. Our economy is open and is over 70 per cent dependent on export trade to earn foreign exchange to meet its development needs.

We find that the multilateral trading rules emanating from the World Trade Organization (WTO) are not fair or equitable, given our development status, geography and size. WTO proposals that have tended towards a one-size-fits-all approach have not fully benefited from an honest and creative application of the special and differential treatment clauses of the WTO. They have not effectively addressed the multiplicity of problems we are facing. They serve only the interests of countries that are developed, big and already established traders globally and, of course, are already well off. The fact that those proposals are formulated with little regard for our concerns has manifested itself in widening disparity, greater marginalization and worsening global poverty.

However, we do not advocate the removal of the multilateral trading arrangement. We just need to make it better. The suspension of the WTO talks on the Doha Development Agenda has further deepened our concerns regarding the need for the multilateral trading rules to show some flexibility so that the development concerns of countries like Fiji can be addressed in the current round of negotiations. We call on the membership of the United Nations to work towards an early resumption of the suspended WTO talks. There is far too much at stake for all of us, and especially for the small islands developing States like Fiji.

We acknowledge the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments in the promotion of human rights. We note that they are concerned primarily with protecting the rights of individuals. Fiji, like other Pacific Islands

indigenous communities, welcomes the decision to bring the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to this Assembly for discussion and adoption. That instrument is vitally important to the recognition and acceptance of the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and of their right to survival as ethnically and culturally distinct peoples.

On the international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, Fiji, like others, has recognized the special needs of persons with disabilities and has already enacted the relevant legislation and subsequently established the Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons. A national policy on disability for 2006-2016, a requirement of the act, is currently being finalized. Fiji strongly supports the international convention and would be in favour of its adoption.

Fiji acknowledges the vital role women play in development. To ensure women's active participation in all facets of development, the monitoring of the rights of women contained in the Beijing Platform of Action has to be reinforced. One effective way to do so is to ensure that domestic policies and legislation are in place to drive gender mainstreaming. That must be a priority target for us all.

Improving world security must be accompanied by appropriate reforms in our Organization. A goal of the current reform of the United Nations is the need to ensure that the voices of small and vulnerable countries like Fiji are given equal treatment in the membership of this global body.

One of the goals of the United Nations reforms is to achieve democratization. Without that, it will remain an Organization driven by sectarian interests, where might is right and moral and ethical considerations fall by the wayside. We must not be deterred from the momentous task we have set for ourselves. The outcome of our concerted and committed effort in those reforms will be a just and stronger Organization, better prepared to address the world's multiplicity of challenges.

A lot has been achieved since we last met in plenary. New challenges have emerged. However, there are still far too many people whose needs and voices are still crying out to be heard. The United Nations remains a beacon of hope for them. Those cries ought to be listened to and people empowered so that they can firmly and confidently take charge of their own destiny. We must all undertake to assist and participate in the work of the United Nations, commensurate, of course, with our respective size and economic standing.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eamon Courtenay, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Courtenay (Belize): I stand before the Assembly and renew the commitment of the Government and people of Belize to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We reaffirm the pledge made by the father of the Belizean nation, the Right Honourable George Price, when he said from this rostrum:

> "Belize, with the help of God and the support of its people, will stand upright and will do its duty to help bring peace, stability and prosperity to our region and the wider circles of our planet Earth." (*A/36/PV.13, para. 143*)

Through you, Sir, we would like to congratulate the President on her election and pledge the support of my delegation for our important work at this session of the General Assembly.

We express our solidarity with our Secretary-General, whose imprint on this institution at this critical time in international affairs will be appreciated and remembered through the ages.

Belize became independent 25 years ago. It was a different time then, in 1981. The cold war was being waged. There was a clash of economic philosophies, and countries were being forced to circle in one of two orbits. But many countries did not; we proclaimed our non-alignment and worked to establish a new international economic order. We sought to create a world which was fairer and more just and which put people at its centre.

We never achieved that dream of a new international economic order. In fact, in 1989, the wall that divided not only a nation, but the entire social and economic order of the world, came tumbling down. The Berlin Wall was torn down nearly two decades ago, but we have yet to tear down the most important wall of all — the one that separates us into rich States and poor States, wealthy and poor, developed and developing.

Almost 15 years ago, we were told that if we tore down barriers to trade, opened up our markets to foreign capital and imported goods, and privatized our State-owned enterprises, our economies would grow by leaps and bounds. We were also told that our partners in the developed world would afford us greater access to their markets, that our commodities would receive fair prices, and that international financiers would make capital readily available for us to borrow.

The question we now ask is: Are we better off having adhered to that so-called development cocktail prescribed by the Washington Consensus?

All is not well. In the Caribbean, 30 per cent of people are living in poverty. In Latin America, the figure is an obscene 40.6 per cent. Worse yet, 16.8 per cent of the people in Latin America live in extreme poverty. Fourteen of the 15 Caribbean countries are among the most indebted emerging market countries. In fact, seven are in the top 10, all with debt-to-gross domestic product ratios of about 100 per cent. To quote from a recent World Bank report:

> "A closer inspection of the data leaves little room for complacency about the world's progress against poverty. Indeed, the picture that emerges is one of highly uneven progress, with serious setbacks in some regions and time periods. And we find that more people living near $2 per day became worse off over the period than the number who gained. Thus the number living under $2 per day rose."

In 2006, now more than ever we need a new international economic order.

In 2001, members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) adopted the Doha Development Agenda. The ministerial declaration proudly proclaimed:

> "The majority of WTO members are developing countries. We seek to place their needs and interests at the heart of the Work Programme adopted in this Declaration."

The WTO sought to design a multilateral trading system that was to "ensure that developing countries secure a share in the growth of world trade that was commensurate with the needs of their economic development". But let me tell members what our reality, the Belizean experience with the WTO, has been.

Since Doha, a panel set up by the WTO decided that the European Union organization of its sugar market was incompatible with WTO rules. To solve that problem, Belizean sugar farmers now get paid less for the sugar exported to the European Union. Simply put, the WTO has made them worse off. Since Doha, the European Union has liberalized its banana import regime. That is supposed to make the regime WTO-compatible. The statistics now show that imports from non-African, Caribbean and Pacific countries into the European Union have outstripped imports from the Caribbean, and prices paid for bananas have fallen.

In the five years since Doha, our hopes have been dashed, ambitions smashed and the development dimension once again ignored. The accord reached at Doha has been systematically dismantled with each subsequent meeting, from Cancún to Hong Kong to Geneva.

We say that there is something inherently wrong with a system that promises development and delivers lower prices for exports. We say that there is something fundamentally unfair in a system that promises a development agenda and delivers suspended negotiations and less market access to small vulnerable economies.

It is in such an environment, defined by multilateralism and the primacy of the markets — liberalism writ large — that small States in the Caribbean operate. It is a system in which unknown people sitting in unmarked rooms in Brussels and Geneva make decisions that determine how many boxes of bananas the Caribbean can export to Europe and what price we get paid for our sugar.

At the end of the day, it is all about social justice and social equity. Is something wrong with a picture in which, of the 6 billion people on planet Earth, 1 billion have more than 80 per cent of world income and 5 billion have less than 20 per cent? Something is radically wrong with that picture. Our common charge is to right that imbalance. The fight against poverty cannot and will not be won with arms and instruments of war. We need a new international economic order in which the rights of people to jobs and fair wages and to fair prices for commodities take precedence over rules of trade that are inherently unfair and inequitable. And small vulnerable economies like ours in the Caribbean need special and differential treatment. Unless we wage the fight against poverty, there will be no peace.

In the absence of peace, insecurity prevails. Insecurity encourages instability.

It is no wonder that, at this time, we find ourselves in retreat, living in a culture of fear and divided by a so-called clash of civilizations. A general sense of lost hope is pervasive and the enthusiasm of the new millennium squandered.

Here at the United Nations, our own concept of dialogue among civilizations seems to be fast fading. We must find a way to build a greater sense of security, renew our faith in each other and deconstruct the walls that divide. That can best be accomplished through our work at the United Nations, and my delegation commends our efforts in endorsing an integrated approach to addressing the transition from conflict to recovery with the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. Together with the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Commission should, in the spirit of its constitution, help to answer those critical questions related to the maintenance of international peace and security and, above all, development.

In these times, when the rules that govern our collective responsibility to international civility and the comity of nations seem to be eroding along with respect for international law, we must look to our institutions to restore our common values.

We are reminded that the primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. The Charter, in giving that mandate, specifies that the conferral of that responsibility is to ensure prompt and effective action when required. But as we have seen with the delayed reaction to the recent events in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, the Council failed to discharge its mandate. The situation in the Middle East necessitates prompt and effective action.

We acknowledge that the shortcomings in the Council's exercise of its mandate may be attributed to its structural imbalances. Those imbalances are not insurmountable and, indeed, call for reform. The Council must reflect the current geopolitical realities. Belize supports comprehensive reform of the Security Council, including the expansion of membership in both permanent and non-permanent categories, and through the improvement of its working methods. We detect a momentum for change and we are ready to engage as equal partners to that end.

We now have a Human Rights Council that we hope will be vigilant in its work to protect the rights of those unable to protect themselves. We will be truly civilized only when we stop the victimization of the weak at the expense of the ideology of the strongest.

We must bring to an end the violence and death of the innocent in Darfur. Our collective conscience is stained by the genocide in Darfur. For every innocent life that is lost to conflict and the denial of basic human rights, we carry the scars of their oppression.

In Belize, we have started a dialogue on the relevance of small States and the role we must play in the maintenance of international peace and security. I have invoked the idea that, in the global war on terrorism, we in the Caribbean and Central America are less important because we operate in a culture of peace and respect for life, and that because most of us lack the armies to join coalitions, we are seen as unwilling or even irrelevant.

Yet our people feel the same fear as those in larger countries; we suffer the economic effects that others suffer and, dare I say, more so because of our vulnerability due to our size. As people at risk, we want to see the billions spent to make war used to bring prosperity and hope to those who live in such despair that they can be enticed into the spreading of terror. We will not be dissuaded from our belief that violence and destruction beget war. Only hope and sustainable development can bear peace.

Today, in our sister Caribbean nation of Haiti, we see the resilience of its people. In the turbulence of the past few years, the people of Haiti have refused to despair. Their desire to live in a democratic society prevailed when they recently went to the polls to elect a new Government. We must not suffer Haiti to slide into irrelevance. We all owe Haiti our commitment to nurturing its growth by building those institutions necessary for a sustainable nation State.

At a time when the world has so much wealth that $900 billion is being spent on military expenditure and $300 billion on agricultural subsidies, but only $60 billion on development assistance, too many of our people remain under the strangulation of poverty, relegated to the dungeons of destitution and social inequality. Yet we come to these occasions and speak of our strong commitment to preserving the dignity of all human beings. We speak of their rights and promise to continue to foster dialogue. And when it comes right

down to it, where the agreements count most the plight of the poor is sacrificed to the bottom line, personal wealth and political survival.

In the Caribbean, we cannot accept that and, while we applaud the efforts of this Organization and the work that has gone into defining agreed development goals, including addressing the needs of our poorest people, the protection of our environment and efforts to promote meaningful sustainable development, we must do more. Each child who goes to sleep hungry contributes to the shame we must all feel in failing to protect his or her basic rights. Each person who dies of HIV/AIDS is a reflection of our lost value for life, and every time the poor die for want of food we have failed humanity.

Twenty-five years ago, as a newly independent country, Belize was welcomed into the United Nations assured of its territorial integrity and its equal place in this community of nations. We earned our rightful place by example and by commitment to this Organization's highest principles. In return, we received the solidarity of all.

Our political independence will remain imperfect until we find a peaceful and just solution to the territorial claim of Guatemala to Belizean territory. We remain committed to finding a solution that respects our territorial integrity and honours our sovereignty.

Membership in the United Nations is an affirmation of the will of sovereign peoples. The United Nations has served as a platform for the expression of that will for many of the nations represented here today. Let us in turn ensure that the United Nations remains a beacon of hope for all peoples who continue the struggle, such as our brothers and sisters in Palestine, Western Sahara, Taiwan and the non-self governing territories.

We warmly welcome Montenegro to the family of nations.

Our conversation began with my seeking answers to the question of the relevance of Belize and other small States in today's global order. I find comfort in the winds of change occurring in our Organization, a change that will bring to this sixty-first session of the General Assembly a new Secretary-General, and that will continue the process of reform mandated in the World Summit Outcome. We must, however, make changes relevant to our time and true to our Charter.

Let us seize this opportunity and face the challenges boldly together. For us in Belize, our minds are imbued with the democratic process, our hearts beat with social justice and our souls cherish the treasures of the spirit.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): First of all, I wish to congratulate Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are convinced that her vast experience in international relations and able leadership will lead this session to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to pay tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, who led the last session of the General Assembly most ably and successfully.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose stewardship of this Organization over the past 10 years has brought many positive and remarkable changes to the world body. His tireless and dedicated service to the international community will be indelibly etched in our collective memory.

The reform of the United Nations to meet the new challenges of our times is an ongoing process that needs to be assessed continuously. While we have achieved tangible progress in some areas, such as the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, progress has yet to be made in other areas. The success of the reform of the United Nations must be judged in terms of its effective response to the contemporary needs of Member States, in particular those of the developing countries, which form the majority of the membership. While many States, including the developing countries, struggle to protect and advance the principles and practices of multilateralism, the tendency towards unilateralism remains strong. That unhealthy tendency can in no way gain ascendancy if the United Nations is to remain viable.

Attempts by some strong and powerful States to impose their will on developing countries in pursuit of their political agenda create an environment of hostility in the international community. To our dismay and frustration, there has been glaring abuse of the mandate

entrusted to the Security Council by Member States by unjustly placing the situation of my country on the agenda of the Security Council and by alleging that it poses a threat to regional peace and security. Nothing could be further from the truth. Myanmar has done nothing that can undermine the peace and security of any country, let alone regional or international peace and security. Myanmar has close and cordial relations with all its five neighbours and other countries in the region.

The founders of the United Nations did not intend the world body to become a forum in which some Members with political and economic clout could gang up against a Member State and label it as what it is not. We therefore urge all Member States to resist attempts by those powerful States to influence the Security Council to take action against a Member State that in no way poses any threat to international peace and security.

Regarding Security Council reform, Myanmar is in favour of the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. The expanded Security Council must also reflect today's political and economic realities. However, the fact that we have not made substantial progress on the expansion of the Council demonstrates the sensitive and complex nature of the issue. It is extremely important that this issue not become divisive among the United Nations membership. Dialogue and consultations must continue to seek a solution acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the membership.

It is encouraging that the first session of the Human Rights Council was successfully held in Geneva in June and that the Council is now working in full swing to quickly become an effectively functioning human rights body. Myanmar's active participation at the highest level in that session is a reflection of our commitment to further strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery.

It is, however, important that the principle of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity be scrupulously observed in the work of the Council. Although we want the Council to become an effective tool in the strengthening of the United Nations human rights machinery, we are not giving it carte blanche. It is through the observation of the aforementioned principles — through dialogue, cooperation and non-politicization of human rights issues — that the Council is to function. It is incumbent not only on the members of the Council, but also on all of us, to ensure that the Council does not deviate from the direction in which we expect it to head.

Terrorism continues to defy the attempts of the international community to eliminate it, raising its ugly head again in Mumbai and elsewhere very recently. We are of the view that it is only through the involvement of every community of people that we can be forewarned in time of the impending onslaught of terrorist acts. Myanmar fully supports the international efforts to eliminate terrorism.

A daunting challenge facing the international community is the horrendous crime of human trafficking, which the Secretary-General aptly refers to as one of the most reprehensible violations of human rights. Despite the efforts of the international community to tackle that issue over the past decade, it continues to grow, with serious national and international implications for the Governments concerned. Human trafficking is a serious international issue and we believe that it requires a coordinated and cooperative response by the entire international community to address the issue.

Myanmar is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocols to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. I would like to stress that Myanmar regards combating trafficking in persons as a national task. We are making relentless efforts in that regard.

Myanmar has designated HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as diseases of national concern. In 1989, we set up a high-level multisectoral national AIDS committee. We have been cooperating with the United Nations and, in 2001, our national AIDS programme and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) drew up a joint programme of action covering education, prevention, cure and rehabilitation to effectively address the challenge. As a result, we have been able not only to level the HIV/AIDS infection rate, but to reduce it. We are also serving on the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, enabling us to address the issue at both the national and international levels.

Narcotic drugs continue to be one of the threats facing us today. As the Government of Myanmar regards the eradication of narcotic drugs as a national responsibility, it has striven relentlessly to eradicate such drugs by 2014. Our determined efforts on all fronts have resulted in a substantial decrease in opium production. I would like to reiterate here that Myanmar will step up its efforts, in close cooperation with friendly countries and international organizations, until we achieve our goal.

Cooperation with the United Nations is a cornerstone of Myanmar's foreign policy. Our track record has proven that Myanmar has invariably extended its cooperation to the United Nations. Myanmar has been implementing a national development plan with the aim of accelerating growth, achieving equitable and balanced development, and reducing the socio-economic development gap between rural and urban areas of the country. The national development plan addresses the major aspects of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We have made significant progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015, particularly in such areas as health, education, sustainable access to safe drinking water, and access to improved sanitation. In implementing the MDGs, we are primarily relying on our national resources. In that regard, we are also receiving valuable assistance and cooperation from the United Nations agencies concerned.

Finally, I wish to apprise the Assembly of the political developments in my country. We have been steadfastly implementing the seven-step road map for transition to democracy, announced in August 2003. The National Convention, which was adjourned on 31 January 2006, will resume its session on 10 October and continue to discuss the basic principles for the drafting of an enduring constitution. I wish to stress that the process of transforming the country into a democratic State will move ahead systematically in accordance with the road map.

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to working together in upholding the principles enunciated in the Charter of the United Nations and in strengthening the role of the United Nations to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Legal Affairs, Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I am indeed honoured to join previous delegations in congratulating Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the Assembly at this sixty-first session. Let me assure her of Grenada's support as she guides these important deliberations towards the implementation of a global partnership for development.

My delegation would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden, who laboured tirelessly during his presidency of the sixtieth session, and for his efforts in guiding the follow-up process to the Summit Outcome.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's tenth and final report, which gives a comprehensive review of the Organization's achievements, challenges and preparation for the future. It is fitting at this juncture to convey to the Secretary-General the appreciation of the Government and people of Grenada for his sterling contribution to world peace and security during his tenure at the helm of this Organization. The road was not always smooth, but with his calm disposition, unmistakable eloquence and astute and dedicated leadership, the Organization was able to overcome the rough patches. We heartily commend his efforts to strengthen the United Nations through the reform process, and wish him well in his future endeavours.

We meet in very difficult times. The effects of rapid technological changes, new geopolitical and economic alliances, evolving rules in international trade, and in particular security concerns, continue to grip ordinary citizens in our small countries and regions, worsening the notion of an uncertain future.

My delegation believes that this year's theme of implementing a global partnership for development is timely and one which, if we work together, will enhance our economies in all of their aspects.

It is for that reason that, within our region, we have taken the necessary steps in response to the challenges we face by deepening our integration arrangements with the creation of the Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy. Recognizing the changing trends related to the movement of skills, Grenada has placed great emphasis on the economic

empowerment of its young people, as well as on the creation of a more diverse and non-traditional job sector. Having lost much of our traditional agriculture through natural disasters and the changing global environment, we have been forced to create alternatives through global partnerships.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, we have encountered untold challenges in attempting to achieve the prescribed goals. As this body is well aware, Grenada, as one of the small States which hold membership in this Organization, has on many occasions relied not only on our immediate regional partners, but also on the wider membership and respective United Nations agencies during some very difficult and trying times. Our most recent past is not yet overcome, since we are still rebuilding our shattered economy following the devastation of two hurricanes in 2004 and 2005.

However, despite those challenges, we pledge to continue to work towards the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals. We have made significant strides in our efforts to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, along with improvements in education, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability.

Grenada has over the years worked closely and successfully with the United Nations agencies in our region. Therefore, we are hopeful that, during this session, no effort will be spared to ensure the sustainability of those agencies.

My delegation has on numerous occasions made reference to the unfortunate reality that special and differential treatment for small and vulnerable economies is fast becoming a thing of the past. We have seen decreases in financial and technical support from traditional partners, and a reduction in the market for trade in goods and services.

In that vein, the suspension of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations in July 2006 was a major setback for my country. International trade and reduction in poverty are inextricably linked to development. Greater market access for products from developing countries can lead to economic growth and higher standards of living. Grenada therefore looks forward to the resumption of those negotiations.

In the past few months, the United Nations has been encumbered with the task of maintaining peace and security in many parts of the world. My delegation commends the efforts made in that respect and welcomes the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will assist States in the post-conflict era. We extend condolences to the families of those brave men and women who lost their lives in the service of the organization. Grenada is proud to be a police-contributing country with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and looks forward to continuing its involvement in that area.

My delegation is well aware that this Organization will have to increase its efforts in combating terrorism, and welcomes the recently agreed Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as a positive step in that regard.

Grenada makes it clear that it uncompromisingly condemns terrorism and all acts of violence, and pledges its full cooperation in combating that phenomenon. Though my delegation is supportive of those measures, as a small island developing State we are faced with serious financial and technical constraints in maintaining continued peace and security within our region. The measures we have implemented in that respect will be tested as we host the 2007 Cricket World Cup in the Caribbean.

My delegation, in applauding the creation of the Human Rights Council, is hopeful that the new body will be able through its work to ensure that democracy and good governance are observed in all their aspects. We fully support the Secretary- General's sentiments that mainstreaming all human rights, including the right to development, is necessary, and support to Member States in their efforts to build stronger national systems for the promotion and protection of human rights is of extreme importance.

Grenada was indeed honoured to participate at the highest level in the launching of the new Central Emergency Response Fund earlier this year and to lend its support to the growth of the Fund. We commend the work of the Organization in that regard and are well aware of the importance of maintaining and supporting the Fund, especially since, globally, there has been an increase in natural and humanitarian disasters. We are pleased with the decision to expand the relationship outside of the membership to include the private, individual and non-governmental sectors.

We call on the international community to honour its responsibility and commitment to the full

implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and to support programmes in our region related to early warning systems, the Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, and vulnerability reduction, while at the same time building resilience.

My delegation has taken note of the resolution on development. However, we are disappointed that this aspect of the Summit Outcome has not progressed with the kind of vigour we would have welcomed. That is of special importance to countries like my own, since support for development objectives is paramount to our economic sustainability. We cannot fail to reiterate our vulnerability and call for swift action at this session in order to ensure the stability of our small societies.

My delegation salutes the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the Organization through its engagement with civil society and other non-State actors, and agrees that they are important to the legitimacy of democratic ideals. Grenada has increased its efforts to strengthen the relationship between Government and the private sector through partnerships in trade, education, health, tourism and investment activities, and has already seen positive results from this type of engagement, especially in the aftermath of the recent hurricanes.

2007 will mark the bicentenary of the passage of the act abolishing the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the British empire, and it is anticipated that the General Assembly will hold a commemorative event to mark that historic occasion. The members of the Caribbean Community will submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly, and we expect the full support of all Member States in that regard.

We, along with other members of the Caribbean Community, feel compelled on a regular basis to make the plea for special attention to be paid to the threat facing the Caribbean Sea. Grenada therefore takes this opportunity to reiterate its concerns over the transshipment of nuclear waste and other hazardous material through the marine environment of the Caribbean. The Caribbean Sea provides for us a lifeline, the potential loss of which could be enormous to our people's livelihood. As we are well aware, loss of economic opportunities brings with it poverty and social unrest and ultimately threatens democracy — a solid tradition on which the Caribbean Community continues to pride itself. We therefore urge understanding and solidarity with our cause.

My delegation applauds the Organization for its work in the areas of reform and looks forward to the continuation of that process, especially in the areas of development, Economic and Social Council reform, Secretariat and management reform, Security Council reform, system-wide coherence, disarmament and non-proliferation, and other areas that have received only partial attention. Let us pursue with vigour our work in ensuring that this body finds ways not only to sustain, but to continue to build on the successes of its past achievements.

The many challenges that we all now face make it necessary that we work together to make the planet a better place for future generations. Let us, then, commit ourselves to cooperating with and supporting each other in the journey towards genuine development.

Finally, my delegation, having listened to the debate over the past few days, is heartened by the pledges of support and is convinced that, together, we can make it work to our collective benefit. Grenada is pleased to join in that pledge and looks forward to working with the Organization and its partners in attaining that goal.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Raphael Tuju, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kenya.

Mr. Tuju (Kenya): Let me add my voice of congratulations to President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her assumption of this driving seat, which has mainly been occupied by men in the history of the United Nations. Before this Assembly last week, we welcomed the first African woman to become a national President — Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia. At last, the glass ceiling that has tended to frustrate the attempts of women to become presidents is surely cracking in several places. We should celebrate that.

Let me also congratulate Ambassador Jan Eliasson of Sweden for a job well done as President of this Assembly.

Kenya is a United Nations country. We attach special significance to our being hosts of the biggest United Nations centre outside the developed world — the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which also hosts the global headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. We are a major

contributor to United Nations peace missions around the world. We subscribe to the principles and ideals of this Organization and have always upheld its Charter.

In my contribution to this general debate, allow me to dwell on the crisis that is Somalia. I do not think that I need to remind the world that there is a crisis in Somalia, but I believe that I must encourage the community of nations to understand that the problem of Somalia is not going to go away unless we take deliberate steps to address the crisis. The comfortable thing to do is to look at Somalia as being far away and hope that the problem will resolve itself somehow.

This afternoon, I bring the bad news that the problem of Somalia is not going to get resolved somehow by itself. All of us, the community of nations, must chip in. If, for a moment, we dwell on the comforting notion that Somali does not concern us, then it may be worth talking to my friends from South Korea or China, which are 8,000 to 10,000 kilometres away from Somalia. A few months ago, pirates from Somalia hijacked merchant ships in international waters off the coast of Somalia. It was only after protracted negotiations that included use of Kenyan intelligence that the merchant seamen from South Korea and China were released safely to their families.

I recount this story of merchant seamen so that all of us in the international community should appreciate that the Somali phenomenon, with no Government in place, is a danger not just to neighbouring countries, but to the whole world. As criminal elements establish their safe enclaves in a country like Somalia, the neighbouring countries and the international community are soon forced to intervene, even militarily, to free hostages, to hunt terrorists or to flush out rebels.

In the new global village, we are all neighbours of Somalia. As a front-line State to that country in crisis, we have participated in negotiations to free hostages. We have cooperated in attempts to arrest criminal elements. We continue to host close to a million refugees. We provide life-saving support in terms of medical facilities and supplies. But above all, we continue to work on efforts to create peace in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government, the Transitional Charter and the Transitional Federal Parliament were established all as a result of a process that took place in Nairobi when we hosted up to 2,000 representatives from a cross-section of Somalia over a period of two years.

Today, I appeal to the rest of the world to take deliberate steps to help Somalia. The time to help is now. Tomorrow may be too late.

There are many communities around the world that attach great importance to funerals. In those communities, most people only stand by and watch when their kin have fallen ill. An occasional visit and some token of support are what obtains. As soon as the patient dies, an avalanche of support flows in. The community of nations must not take that cynical or undertaker's approach. We are already too late, and any intervention we implement now is of an ambulance-and-fire-brigade variety, at best, but it is better than simply standing by like spectators.

Somalia is almost dying. We can see it. We have known that for the past 16 years. This is the time to send in life-saving support. It is really a tribute to the resilience of the Somali people that there are still living human beings in that country. One day or one month without Government, police, hospitals or banks in modern society is unimaginable. The Somalis have endured for 16 years. How much longer are they expected to endure? Where is the international rescue plan with a billion dollars? Where is the Marshall Plan for Somalia?

Even a much better but devastated Japan and Germany needed a Marshall Plan after the Second World War. We in our region are sure that humanitarian intervention now will yield better and faster results than military intervention and at a much cheaper price than sending troops to pursue criminal elements in a failed State. That is not rocket science or complex economic theory. That is common sense. All we need is the will and the focus to apply ourselves collectively to the problem of Somalia. I appreciate how difficult it is to be focused, given the several competing issues around the world, but focused we must be if we are to avoid the current flip-flopping from one crisis to another like chickens with their heads cut off.

I hear talk today about religious extremists in Somalia. What did we expect? Our own seven-year-old children become extremists in our households if they go without food for one day. Somali children, youth, women and men have been going hungry for 16 years and living under very difficult circumstances. To be extremist is the normal human reaction in such

circumstances and one does not have to have studied psychiatry at the PhD level to recognize that. If similar circumstances in Somalia prevailed in other countries, we all know that moderation would be the exception.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the position of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on Somalia. Our IGAD position is to support the Transitional Federal Government, together with such legitimate transitional federal institutions as the Parliament in Baidoa and the Transitional Charter that is the broadly negotiated road map for Somalia.

As IGAD, we have also opened a window of dialogue with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Some four weeks ago, I met representatives of the ICU in Nairobi. We believe that, as in all situations of conflict, the final resolution is best achieved through dialogue. That is why, in our communiqué issued in Nairobi, we welcomed the Khartoum talks that brought together the Transitional Federal Government and the ICU. But we are also concerned that communiqués after these dialogue conferences should be genuine. Soon after the Khartoum meeting, the news from Somalia has not been encouraging. There was an assassination attempt on the life of President Yusuf. One more city was overtaken by the ICU, not to mention the cold-blooded murder of a long-serving humanitarian worker, a dedicated Catholic nun. The upbeat communiqué released from Khartoum begins to look like a sandwich without meat, fed to a world that is starved of any encouraging news from Somalia.

There is a critical path that was set up by IGAD with the help of the international community and that resulted in the formation of the Somali Transitional Charter that is recognized by the African Union and the United Nations. We are encouraged by the United Nations positive endorsement of the Transitional Charter, which includes the Transitional Federal Government and the Transitional Federal Parliament. Indeed, the Transitional Federal Government is fully accredited to the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD, and the presidency of the Security Council has articulated that recognition through its various communications, including the presidential statement of 13 July.

However, there is a major obstacle faced by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. Without substantive international support beyond the recognitions, accreditations, resolutions and statements I have alluded to, the bottom line remains that the Transitional Federal Government is like people thrown into the deep end of turbulent waters and are expected to swim with their hands tied behind their backs while hungry crocodiles surround them. It is not a very encouraging scenario. That is why we appeal for more meaningful support for the Transitional Federal Government, even as we insist that it continue to dialogue with various groupings in Somalia.

The international community must work to help Somalia and not inadvertently compound the problem in that country. It is vital that the international community consolidate its efforts and not send discordant messages from Stockholm, New York, Nairobi, Khartoum, Cairo, Addis Ababa or anywhere else. Whatever the motives behind the proliferation of initiatives from different capitals, we must recognize that discordant signals act only to give incentive to some of the actors on the ground to attempt to establish new facts on the ground that they may leverage in future negotiations.

I discussed that matter with the Secretary-General of the Arab League this morning and yesterday. Kenya has put forward the following proposal, which I would like to share with the General Assembly. We propose that an international joint committee on Somalia be constituted with the following membership: IGAD, representing the front-line States; the African Union; the Arab League, also representing the front-line States; the European Union; and the United Nations, with at least one or two permanent members of the Security Council to be included. It is our submission that the international joint commission will help consolidate our efforts and bring about a speedier resolution of the problem.

It is worth noting that the initiative that resulted in the formation of the current Transitional Federal Government was the fourteenth attempt to resolve the Somali conflict after 14 years. Its collapse would bring us back to square one in terms of coming up with an institutional framework that enjoys political legitimacy. The Secretary-General of the Arab League has expressed his support for the Kenyan proposal and we hope that we can proceed on that path by building on the foundations already established by IGAD, rather than allow another proliferation of vertical initiatives. We appeal to other partners to embrace the proposal.

On a more hopeful note, let me register our delight at the progress made by our neighbours Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa in brokering the Burundi peace agreement. We commend their collective effort. The news from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also encouraging.

As Kenya takes over the chairmanship of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which will convene in December this year, let me assure the Assembly that we will do our best to contribute to the stabilization of our region, which is really a very tough neighbourhood to live in.

Finally, let me congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his exemplary stewardship of this world body. As a brother from Africa, I can confidently say that he has done us proud.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Frederick M. Mitchell, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): I congratulate Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I also commend her predecessor, Jan Eliasson of Sweden, for his outstanding performance as President of the General Assembly at the preceding session.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his many years of dedication to the United Nations. The Government and people of the Bahamas are profoundly grateful to Secretary-General Annan for all that he has done for the United Nations, and I look forward to welcoming him one day to the Bahamas so that we might thank him personally.

I also congratulate and welcome Montenegro as the 192nd State Member of the United Nations and convey the best wishes of the Government of the Bahamas for the prosperity and welfare of all its people.

The Bahamas stands for democracy, the rule of law and the right to self-determination. In this very body, before the Committee of 24 on decolonization, our national leaders made the case for the independence of our country. We were able to achieve that in 1973, and ever since then successive administrations have voiced the Bahamas' support of the same principles. I do so again today. In doing so, I remind this body that the Bahamas and the region of which it is a part are shining examples to all the world of all of those principles. Within the next year, the Bahamian people will again have the opportunity to choose their Government in a general election based on universal adult suffrage. There have been, within the past year in our region, similar general elections in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana. The Bahamas does not support the use of the military in Government or to overthrow legitimately elected Governments. Wherever that occurs, it must be deplored and there must be a return to constitutional democratic rule within the shortest possible time.

In our foreign policy, the Bahamas believes in peace with all nations and we seek to avoid ideological battles. Ours is a policy that avoids extremism, while at the same time letting our voice be heard for the dispossessed. We have the right to be here to speak for ourselves and to speak for those who cannot speak. Our people have fought for their voice to be heard and they will be heard.

My delegation welcomes the attempt by the Security Council to increase the transparency of the selection process in that body for the post of Secretary-General by apprising the President of the General Assembly of its proposed actions on this matter and on the results of the straw polls. We would take this opportunity to assure this body that whoever succeeds to the post will have our support and cooperation.

It was just over a year ago that we adopted the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document that has served as the road map for reform efforts over the past 12 months. The Bahamas, like other States Members of this Organization, is pleased that a number of reforms have been implemented. In that regard, we note the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. With regard to the Human Rights Council, we hope that it will evolve as an entity dedicated to a process of constructive dialogue and cooperation in which all countries may participate on an equal footing.

The Bahamas renews its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, and in particular to universal education, fighting HIV/AIDS, equality for women and cutting poverty in half by 2015. The country's international, award-winning Urban Renewal Initiative has begun to address in particular the issue of poverty in the Bahamas. The further reform of the Economic and Social Council should lead to its being

empowered to implement the internationally agreed development goals and commitments to the eradication of poverty, hunger and all other ills that continue to plague humanity.

I turn now to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the issue of regional global security. We renew our commitments in that area. However, as we have done for the past four years, we want to take the opportunity to further define our security interests as not being limited to the strategies defined by a narrow view of counter-terrorism. We believe that counter-terrorism strategies should be informed by a much broader definition, namely, as ensuring the stability of our societies as we fight our vulnerabilities to drug traffickers, natural and environmental disasters and poverty, and our challenges with education and health care. In particular, we call upon the developed economies in our region and further afield to remember their moral and legal obligations to stop the assault of small arms on our societies, to cooperate in stopping the flow of drugs through our region, and to work together with us in declaring the Caribbean Sea and its environs to be a nuclear-free zone. There must be a strategic alliance between developed economies and those in our region to ensure that those security vulnerabilities are minimized, if not eliminated.

The Bahamas is greatly heartened by the fact that Member States have agreed on the text of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which is to be adopted by the General Assembly in the months ahead. That landmark convention recognizes the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices, and it acknowledges that those persons should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, particularly those of direct concern to them. That is an important step in empowering not only persons with disabilities, but also the neighbourhoods, communities, societies and countries in which they live. For too long, persons with disabilities have been marginalized in many settings, depriving them of their rights as citizens and depriving society of the many contributions they could make in the exercise of their full and unimpeded participation. The Bahamas plans legislation to further empower the disabled during the current session of our Parliament.

It has often been said that reform is a process and not an event. We continue to support reform of the Security Council so that it may more accurately reflect the interests and balance of power in the realities of the twenty-first century, including allowing small island developing States to play a greater role in its activities. It is our hope that, during this sixty-first session of the General Assembly, we will see some significant movement in the reform of the Security Council.

Any reform would mean very little, however, if it did not ultimately translate into the well-being of the people of this planet. In that vein, the Bahamas will do its part towards the implementation of the global partnership for development and the translation of that partnership into not only effective international, multilateral economic, trading, financial and environmental governance systems and mechanisms, but also into the proliferation of healthy, productive households and communities that contribute to increased global welfare and security.

We want to take this opportunity to recall our concern about coercive measures by developed States that adversely affect the trade in services in the Bahamian economy and in our region generally. We reiterate our call for levelling the playing field and for a global forum to address how the issue of a level playing field can be translated into international public policy.

The Bahamas welcomed and participated in the recent High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. At that time, the Bahamas outlined the many positive impacts that international migration had made on its economy and cultural development. However, the Bahamas also noted the many challenges the country had experienced over the previous 60 years in managing migration, including those related to the prevention of irregular or unauthorized migration.

For the Bahamas, irregular or unauthorized migration has given rise to considerable challenges in the social and educational sectors, as well as to serious national security issues. In this regard, the Bahamas has pledged to work with our partners in the region towards the establishment of a better way to match the supply with the demand for migration in safe, legal, humane and orderly ways, in order to maximize the societal and human development potential of global labour mobility, with the involvement of private-sector and public-sector stakeholders.

The Bahamas is committed to sustainable development. To a small-island developing State, there are few things more important than securing the necessary assistance in order to build resilience against the many hazards that afflict the country on a consistent basis, including violent storms or hurricanes, which pass through our region even more frequently as a result of global warming. In this connection, we look to our partners in the region, the hemisphere and around the world to reduce greenhouse gases. We call on those countries that have not yet done so to sign the Kyoto Protocol. It is also imperative that we all commit ourselves to the development of alternative sources of energy, in order to become less dependent on the current polluting technologies that supply our energy needs but threaten our sustainability.

The Bahamas would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the people of one of our regional partners, Haiti, on the election and installation of its democratically elected Government. It is imperative that the international community do all it possibly can to help Haiti establish stability and security and promote sustained and sustainable development within its national borders.

As I have stated on previous occasions, the Bahamas, which sits some 90 miles over the seas to the north of Haiti, has a special interest in its stability and prosperity. Instability in Haiti is bound to cause instability in the Bahamas. A significant proportion of the population in the Bahamas is either Haitian or of Haitian descent. A migration crisis resulting from instability in Haiti will have an immediate effect on the Bahamas. Such a crisis would be difficult for our country to endure and, with the will of the Haitian community and the support of the world community, we believe that it can and should be avoided.

The Bahamas has always made known its support for the people of Haiti and their aspirations for peace, security and development. We have and continue to take seriously our commitment to assist the people of Haiti in taking charge of their destiny and placing their country on the path to enduring democracy and development. The Bahamas believes that it is therefore imperative that the promised international financial assistance to Haiti is delivered in a timely and efficient manner.

I would also like to take this opportunity to signal my Government's support for the upcoming Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Caribbean Common Market initiative to encourage the United Nations to mark and commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 2007. Slavery and the concomitant slave trade together stand as one of the most vicious violations of human rights in recorded history. As the global sentinel for human rights, the United Nations has a duty to highlight the 200th anniversary of the cessation of this crime against humanity with a special event in 2007. We hope that this initiative will receive the wide and enthusiastic support of this General Assembly and indeed of the wider United Nations community.

This commemoration will present an ideal opportunity to pay tribute to peoples of African descent across the entire spectrum of the diaspora who share a common heritage and, having survived the middle passage, have gone on to form the bedrock on which the prosperity of many developed countries has been built. For its part, the Bahamas plans to undertake a number of commemorative events including a festival of arts which will run from March 2007 to January 2008. During the festival, a different country or region of Africa will be showcased each month as a means of exposing Bahamians to the rich culture of Africa through theatre, art, music and dance.

One of the other challenges that we will face during this session is reaching agreement on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of expenses of the United Nations for the next triennium. We look forward to engaging with other Member States to achieve a scale of assessments that is broadly based on the principle of the capacity to pay, and that it is transparent, equitable and stable.

The Bahamas continues to believe that the Charter of the United Nations constitutes a viable and firm foundation on which the Organization can balance and achieve its objectives to maintain international peace and security and to promote economic and social progress. I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the principles enshrined in that universal document, as well as to the ongoing process of reform, which seeks to more effectively translate these principles into real peace, security and sustainable development for all the world's inhabitants. While dramatic progress may sometimes evade us, we must not be swayed from our course, and we must remain confident that our

activities and efforts will benefit future generations. Now more than ever we need the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rudolph Insanally, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guyana and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Just about a month ago, the people of Guyana went to the polls to vote for the Government of their choice. Witnessed by an unprecedented number of observers drawn from several countries and international organizations, including the United Nations, the elections were deemed to be free, fair and transparent. With a renewed mandate, the Government led by President Bharrat Jagdeo, has recommitted itself to the pursuit of democratic governance at home and to a progressive foreign policy abroad.

I am pleased, on behalf of the Government and the people of Guyana to convey to the President of the Assembly our warmest congratulations on her election and to wish her much success during her term of office. To her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, I would like to express our appreciation and thanks for directing the work of the Assembly this past year with considerable expertise and aplomb. And to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who demits his post later this year, I wish to offer our sincere gratitude for his impressive leadership of the United Nations during an uncertain and challenging period. He leaves with our best wishes for his future health and happiness.

As a fledgling democracy, Guyana is proud to be part of the family of free nations. We are dedicated to the creation of a society based on equity and social justice that guarantees to all our citizens their fundamental freedoms and rights. To this end, we have enshrined in our Constitution provisions for the full enjoyment of these entitlements. In the same spirit, we have acceded to the many international treaties and conventions that embody agreements on the rights of peoples. Article 154 A of our Constitution guarantees that "such rights embodied in these international instruments shall be respected and upheld by the executive, legislature, judiciary and all organizations and agencies of Government". We are thus fully committed to international cooperation for global peace and development.

The President of the Assembly is to be commended for proposing for discussion by this Assembly the topic "Implementing the global partnership for development". Ever since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has laboured to produce an effective development strategy. Decade after decade, several proposals were laboriously drafted, only to be quickly relegated to the archives. It was not surprising, therefore, that countries, especially the developing nations, eventually became disillusioned owing to the little that was achieved.

The World Hearings on Development that were held during Guyana's presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session sought a new approach to the issue of development by bringing together all the relevant actors — distinguished world leaders, member Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society — to analyse deficiencies in international cooperation. What was needed, it was said, was a new development architecture, not a tinkering with the old.

Following up on the promise of these hearings, the General Assembly proceeded in 1997 to elaborate an agenda for development. There could be no more comprehensive and compelling document than that. Yet, it too was soon buried and forgotten. By the year 2000, the international community had decided that enough was enough and that instead of forging yet another declaration it would set for itself certain precise and time-bound goals.

Our pursuit of these Millennium Development Goals thus far has shown that while our efforts may indeed lift some countries out of poverty, significant and sustainable development will be achieved only through the international cooperation required in Goal 8. It is worthy of note that, while there are clear measurements of progress under Goals 1 to 7, no well-defined indicators exist for Goal 8 — the global partnership for development — an omission that clearly limits the effort at cooperation and creates an imbalance in the partnership.

If I have delved into the history of the development challenge, it is not to dwell on the past, but rather to draw from it lessons that may help us in the future to translate our long-held aspirations into early reality. Allow me, therefore, to offer some thoughts on how the global partnership for development may be strengthened.

As was determined at Monterrey, partnership, coherence and accountability are vital to the fulfilment of our development goals. Without close and genuine cooperation between donors and recipients, there is not likely to be significant progress. At the national level countries should own their development strategies, while at the international level there should be greater coordination and consistency of support in the trade, monetary and financial systems. Much too often it is the developing countries that are scrutinized and scolded for their shortcomings, while their developed partners are considered above blame. True partnership requires mutual accountability. Accordingly, we would propose that there should be some verification of donor pledges and periodic reviews of performance on both sides.

Implementation of the global partnership would be greatly facilitated if the task were to be seen in terms of mutual benefit and not of charity or obligation. Both sides must be involved in the decision-making process in all cooperation agreements. Such participation would produce a greater sense of ownership by the developing countries and, consequently, a deeper sense of commitment to execution. At the recent World Bank/IMF meeting held in Singapore and chaired by the President of Guyana, the IMF Managing Director is reported to have proposed a rearrangement of quotas that would enable developing countries to be more involved in decision-making. Although the change cannot be considered as comprehensive as necessary, it is, nonetheless, a first step toward more democratic governance in the management of development.

Furthermore, given the inadequacy of resources that have been available thus far for development, we must endeavour to identify, as we pledged in Monterrey, new and additional sources of financing. The Millennium Challenge Account and the International Finance Facility have been welcome attempts to provide fresh funding. More recently, at the initiative of France, Brazil and others a tax on air travel has been proposed — and implemented by some countries — and promises to provide substantial revenues to support development. Similar proposals, such as the Tobin tax, a tax on pollution and a low-elasticity commodities tax, are on the table. What is needed now is a serious evaluation of these suggestions to determine their feasibility for implementation by the international community.

Implementation of the global partnership undoubtedly suffers from the "beggar-thy-neighbour" attitude that exists in international economic and trade relations. As evidenced in the recent Doha Development Round negotiations, the predominant interests of the developed countries in such areas as agriculture, subsidies and services have effectively denied developing nations, more particularly the small and vulnerable, any prospect of significant participation in the global economy. Without expanded trade opportunities, investment and a comprehensive framework of support, development for many countries will continue to be elusive. We need, therefore, to ensure that the Doha Development Round is revived and that broad assistance is provided to serve the purposes of development.

An increasingly formidable challenge to implementing the development agenda is the spread of transboundary crime, including arms and drug trafficking, which has reached new and alarming levels that cripple economic growth. Governments can ill afford the resources needed to fight the drug lords, who are themselves endowed with considerable assets and artillery. Unfortunately, whatever assistance is provided by donor countries and relevant agencies is woefully inadequate to deal with the onslaught. This growing insurgency can be counteracted only by greater determination on the part of the United Nations system to collaborate fully to crush transboundary crime. Our developed partners therefore need to do more to assist in the fight against this scourge.

A more serious inhibitor to economic growth and social progress is the current unsettled international political climate, in which recourse to conflict is seen as a ready means of settling international issues. The egregious examples of Iraq and Lebanon, where force has been used to achieve political aims and objectives, have clearly shown that violence solves nothing. Indeed, the havoc and destruction wrought by war seriously diminish the prospects for development, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere. The agenda for peace cannot be implemented without due regard to the agenda for development.

The Government of Guyana has long been persuaded of the need for a new global human economic and social order that is capable of delivering true democracy and social justice to all peoples. First posited in 1994 at the World Summit on Social Development by the late President Jagan of Guyana,

the concept is premised on a comprehensive and holistic approach to development aimed at achieving more inclusive economic and social progress. The new global human order initiative, which is already being considered by this Organization and has been supported by many Member States, seeks to create a consensus on a new model of development that would be based on genuine partnership among States and a joint endeavour to secure peace and prosperity for all.

No less formidable and challenging to the development agenda than the international political and economic environment is the fragile ecosystem in which we now live. We have all witnessed the increasing number of earthquakes, floods, tropical storms and hurricanes, which cause catastrophic damage wherever they occur. Less than two years ago, my own country was struck by a flood, resulting in damage equivalent to 60 per cent of our gross domestic product. It would be foolish — perhaps fatal — if we did not prepare ourselves to anticipate and withstand such disasters. Early-warning systems should be established across the globe and financial resources made available to the United Nations fund to facilitate early responses and recovery. In short, disaster mitigation should now become an integral part of the development agenda.

Experience has taught us that development is a complex and complicated phenomenon, and that the many challenges we now face are such that they cannot be overcome without full international cooperation. Yet our responses continue to be ad hoc and woefully inadequate to deal with the resolution of the problems that we are confronting. The development agenda has now become more extensive and is very urgent. With courage and vision, we must renew our commitment to the implementation of the global partnership for development. Our common humanity and, indeed, a common sense of decency and morality, demand no less.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anthony Hylton, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Hylton (Jamaica): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly at its sixty-first session on behalf of my country, Jamaica.

I would like to congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the Assembly. It is a particular pleasure for me today to acknowledge that achievement, as she is one of only three women in the history of the General Assembly to have occupied that post, and — significantly — the first since 1969, nearly 40 years ago.

I would also take this opportunity to express deep appreciation for the work carried out during the sixtieth session of the Assembly by Mr. Jan Eliasson, under whose leadership so much was accomplished in an extraordinarily challenging year, notably the adoption of the World Summit Outcome Document.

As we begin this new United Nations year, we ask ourselves, "What is the state of our world?" We ask this particularly in the context of the determination and resolution of our leaders in 2005 to urgently address the issue of the storm clouds which were threatening the vast majority of humankind, particularly in the developing world. We see a continued challenging time ahead for development, for peace and security, for democracy and social institutions and for multilateralism. We see an environment in which the credibility of the international system to deliver fairly and equitably is being increasingly questioned.

These were the very issues and circumstances which world leaders sought to address at the beginning of the sixtieth session in 2005. Their Summit Outcome Document contained a raft of resolutions, commitments and recommendations to deal with fundamental issues and constraints, and was intended to give political momentum to achieving the commonly agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The leaders, while recognizing that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, reaffirmed that development is a central goal in and of itself.

Jamaica remains deeply committed to the three pillars of the United Nations, but considers development to be at the very core. For this reason, Jamaica is concerned about the fact that we have not discerned any significant focus on implementation in the area of development over the past year — a year dedicated to implementation. The implementation gap has been greater in this area than in either of the other two areas.

Increased, albeit still insufficient, attention is being accorded to those who live in extreme poverty — those living on less than $1 per day. The Secretary-General cited some startling statistics in his report on

the work of the Organization. I would like to refer to two examples: 10 million children die before their fifth birthday, and women in developing countries are 45 times more likely to die during pregnancy than women in developed countries. That is irrefutable evidence that the situation remains in absolute and comparative terms, deeply unsatisfactory and unsustainable in an interdependent world.

Jamaica and other developing countries consistently argued in all the debates leading up to and during the 2005 Summit that, in addition to the poorest countries, the situation of vulnerable middle- and lower- middle-income countries, especially small island and highly externally dependent economies, needed to be addressed. A number of potentially very useful provisions were incorporated into the Summit Outcome document to address their particular circumstances. But, frankly, Jamaica has seen little resolve on the part of the international community to implement those commitments. We have seen no work, for example, to implement the commitment to support the development efforts of middle-income developing countries to help them meet, among other things, their financial, technical and technological requirements. Nor have we seen any effort to develop a framework for providing significant debt relief or restructuring for middle-income developing countries with unsustainable debt burdens that are not part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, or to comprehensively address the debt problems of those countries. Thirdly, there has been no effort to implement the development dimension of the Doha Work Programme, in particular the World Trade Organization's Work Programme on Small Economies.

We recognize that there was a welcome increase in official development assistance from $69 million in 2003 to $106 million in 2005. Much of the additional funding was targeted to a small number of admittedly very deserving countries — mainly for debt relief — and to peacekeeping. There was little new money for investment in development projects, even in the poorest countries.

It has always been recognized that many of the resources for financing development must come from trade. That was clearly stated in the Monterrey Consensus (A/CONF.198/11) and repeated in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). In the Outcome Document, leaders of developed and developing countries committed to work expeditiously towards implementing the development dimensions of the Doha Work Programme. They also emphasized the need to address weak and volatile commodity prices and to support the efforts of commodity-dependent countries to restructure, diversify and strengthen the competitiveness of their commodity sectors.

Instead of expedition and facilitation, we have seen stalemate and breakdown in the Doha round of negotiations. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that, in the negotiations that did take place, the development dimension — especially as it relates to small and vulnerable economies such as that of Jamaica — was conspicuously absent from the debate. These issues must be addressed in any effort to restart the negotiations.

Jamaica strongly supports the view that fundamental to a viable and equitable trade regime is the need to take account of the wide disparity in structural characteristics and approaches to economic policy among the many members of the World Trade Organization, and the consequent need for flexibility. We would add, for clarity, the need to include the differences in levels of development among economies and the asymmetries existing between developed and developing countries.

As a small country with a debt burden of more than 125 per cent of its gross domestic product; a country whose exports have been falling in value and whose markets are threatened by the current uncritical approach to globalization and trade liberalization; a country dependent on imported petroleum for more than 90 per cent of its commercial energy and whose energy bill was more than $1 billion in 2005; an island vulnerable to a range of natural hazards and still working to recover from major hurricanes and droughts in 2004 and 2005; and a country whose skilled professionals — doctors, nurses, teachers and scientists in particular — are targeted by some major developed countries, Jamaica understands the need for a collaborative and facilitative international environment and for coherence in policies. Successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals cannot be assured in the face of those challenges.

Jamaica recognizes that there can be no sustained development, no poverty eradication and no lasting peace without the advancement, equality and empowerment of women. Women's advancement is a

priority of our national policy, and we support all international initiatives to that end.

We are encouraged by action aimed at implementing some of the mandates agreed at the 2005 Summit. In the area of international peace and security, the Peacebuilding Commission has been established, with an emphasis on addressing post-conflict situations. Jamaica has the honour to be a founding member of that body and will be actively involved in the achievement of its objectives. With regard to human rights, the Human Rights Council has been established. In the field of humanitarian affairs, the Central Emergency Response Fund has been established, and an agreement has been reached on the protection of humanitarian personnel. We welcome the finalization of the draft Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and look forward to its formal adoption later this year. We welcome also the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 60/262), adopted at the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS. We urge the full implementation of those decisions to comprehensively tackle this scourge in the most seriously affected countries and regions. For the Caribbean region, HIV/AIDS is a major human, social and economic challenge.

The recent High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, convened in keeping with the mandate of the 2005 World Summit, and the publication of the United Nations Population Fund's 2006 State of World Population report have been very timely. They highlighted, among other things, the multidimensional nature of international migration, its importance in the globalization process and the potential for further widening of the development gap between rich and poor countries. They raised a number of critical issues for the attention of the international community.

Jamaica is particularly concerned about the selectivity in the policies of developed countries, their deliberate targeting of critical skilled professionals of developing countries, accompanied by the tightening of their general immigration laws against the unskilled and the young, and their systematic and wholesale repatriation of those who run into difficulty with their laws — especially hardened criminals, many of whom have little or no connection, if they ever did, with the receiving developing country. Those policies are inconsistent, counterproductive and, with all due respect, frankly wrong. They demand the urgent attention of the international community. We look forward to these issues being studied and given the required attention at the follow-up meeting to be held in Belgium in March 2007.

We note the continued emphasis on the strengthening of the United Nations and the adoption of reform measures aimed at improving accountability and transparency and at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the Secretariat in implementing the programmes mandated by Member States. We stress that reform should ensure the strengthening of the United Nations. That should be our motivation. We should never allow reform to erode the fundamental institutional framework of the United Nations or the right of each Member State to be fully involved in the Organization's decision-making processes and to contribute to advancing its goals and ideals. That right has been the fundamental strength of the United Nations and what sets it apart from many other multilateral institutions. It is and should remain the standard.

Geopolitical realities have changed significantly since the establishment of the United Nations. It is therefore logical that the Security Council should be reflective of the contemporary international community as a whole, on the basis of equitable geographical representation and greater representation of developing countries. How can it be that less than 5 per cent of the membership of the Organization continues to wield inordinate power over the rest of us? That is undemocratic and, ultimately, unsustainable. It is on that basis that Jamaica supports expansion in both categories of Council membership, with increased representation for all regional groups.

Jamaica underscores the vital importance of coherence in policy action and advice among the United Nations and other international institutions, including the international financial institutions, as well as regional organizations, in the effort to facilitate and encourage development, especially that of the small, vulnerable and otherwise disadvantaged countries.

Over the years, Jamaica has experienced more than its fair share in terms of the adverse impact of incoherent international policies and advice. I will provide just three examples. First, Jamaica has been

forced to hold a large fund of international reserves in developed countries. At the end of August 2006, Jamaica's net international reserves stood at approximately $2.2 billion, or 18 weeks of imported goods and services, while the country needs foreign exchange to facilitate investment projects.

Secondly, Jamaica has entered into international commitments under the Millennium Development Goals, inter alia to expand education and health care, to enhance environmental protection, to strengthen rural development and to improve housing and sanitation. These are all labour-intensive activities. The International Monetary Fund, without providing any analysis, is giving advice and insisting that Jamaica reduce its public service drastically.

Thirdly, Jamaica is forced to compete with the salaries being offered by developed countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States to large categories of employees, including teachers and nurses, while seeking to reduce its fiscal deficit. This is one of the major difficulties that the Government is facing in its current wage negotiations with the members of some of these categories, with a view to completing its second memorandum of understanding with public sector workers.

The United Nations has a major responsibility to lead in the quest for coherence in international economic programmes and policies. Jamaica believes that a fortified United Nations, in particular a strengthened Economic and Social Council, is vital if that role is to be effective.

We continue to live in very turbulent times. Global peace, security and stability continue to be elusive. All the multilateral gains that we have made in recent years will come to little if existing conflict situations are not resolved and if new military interventions, acts of terrorism and other debilitating threats to peace, security and development arise.

We must continue to emphasize the critical importance of multilateral diplomacy, even-handedness and maximum restraint. We must reinforce the mutually beneficial relationships among us as a community of nations. We must equip the United Nations to act, and act decisively, when necessary. In that regard, we welcome Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and look forward to every effort being made to build on this new platform to secure a lasting peace in the Middle East.

We cannot remain indifferent to the tragic plight of the people of Darfur, the Sudan. History has repeatedly demonstrated that indifference emboldens those who seek to act with impunity, resulting in even greater atrocities and humanitarian crises. The international community must act urgently to promote human security and to protect the lives of innocent civilians.

Disarmament and non-proliferation go hand in hand. It is only through the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that international peace and security can be assured. Jamaica is therefore disheartened that the international community failed to seize the opportunities provided by the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and by the World Summit to make significant progress on this issue.

Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean region have to confront major security concerns as a result of the ease of access to illicit small arms and ammunition and the linkages to transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking. Jamaica feels a deep sense of disappointment that the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects failed to conclude an outcome document which would have introduced improvements in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Jamaica will continue to advocate for the creation of a legally binding instrument which more strictly controls the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

The recent adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) is a very clear demonstration that the international community can come together to confront major threats to civility, the rule of law and international peace and security. This should be our modus operandi.

We have been particularly encouraged by developments in Haiti, which have led to the democratic election of the Government of President René Préval. In July, Haiti was able to again take its rightful place in CARICOM. Coupled with the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti until February 2007, attention can now be focused on institution- and capacity-building,

as well as on reconstruction and other initiatives for economic and social development in that country.

The bicentenary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the British Empire will be marked in 2007. For all CARICOM countries this is a special anniversary based on shared history. To symbolize the occasion, CARICOM members will be introducing a draft resolution at this session of the General Assembly with the expectation that the Assembly will appropriately recognize the event. We look forward to the support of all delegations.

Jamaica strongly reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations and the multilateral process. Our continued commitment at all levels, including our support for the work of the International Seabed Authority, remains firm.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General for his outstanding leadership in guiding the work of the Organization over the past 10 years. He has faced the challenges of our times. He has re-engineered the position of Secretary-General to become the face, voice and conscience of the international community. He has brought civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector into the United Nations. He has leveraged and brought into international service high achievers in a range of disciplines. And he has increased opportunities for consultation and dialogue. We wish him the very best.

Jamaica looks forward to a transparent and inclusive process to provide our Organization with a new Secretary-General who enjoys the confidence of the full membership.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Charles Savarin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade, Labour and the Public Service of Dominica.

Mr. Savarin (Dominica): I would like to extend my congratulations to Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa and to her country, Bahrain, on her election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that she will ably build upon the legacy left by her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden. Mr. Eliasson deserves special recognition for the competent and dedicated manner in which he presided over the sixtieth session and facilitated the positive outcomes that we have witnessed so far in the United Nations reform agenda.

Let me also pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for his distinguished career as an international civil servant, specifically his 10-year stint as Secretary-General. His wisdom and his unwavering commitment to multilateralism have contributed immensely to a revitalized United Nations. He will most certainly be remembered for his steadfast promotion of human rights, for creating space at the United Nations for civil society and the private sector and for his visionary outlook for the future of the United Nations in the current global dispensation. We wish to thank him for his invaluable service to this Organization and its Member States, and to extend our very best wishes to him in his future endeavours.

The World Summit last year started us on the path of re-engineering the United Nations to make it more relevant and responsive to the many challenges that threaten peace and security in the world at the beginning of this century. The Summit Outcome clearly reflected a historic compromise by Member States on a number of core principles and attendant actions to face squarely the myriad problems confronting the planet. Most importantly, we reaffirmed the commitment we made at the beginning of the millennium to confront the scourge of poverty and to improve the living conditions of millions of people living in abject poverty. Our challenge today is to clarify how the international community can more effectively contribute towards the global goals of poverty alleviation, peace and development for all humanity.

The dynamics of today's world, conditioned by immense forces of change, have forced us to accept the stark reality that no nation can prosper alone and that the problems we face demand global consensus. Consequently, all of us must emphatically reaffirm central role of the United Nations in the cooperative management of the world's problems. Dominica firmly supports a rejuvenated United Nations and universal application of its ideals, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

We welcome progress towards realizing some of the commitments made by world leaders last year. Creation of the Peacebuilding Commission now

presents a great opportunity for ensuring a tangible connection between conflict resolution and development. It is our hope that the new Human Rights Council will remain focused on its mission and avoid becoming entangled in the politicization that contributed to the eventual demise of its predecessor. The Human Rights Council has made a commendable start with the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which in turn gives great impetus to the aspirations of the Second United Nations Decade of the World's Indigenous People, which the Commonwealth of Dominica has steadfastly supported, as one of the few Caribbean countries with a thriving indigenous Carib population. We, therefore, call on the General Assembly to give full support to the adoption of this declaration by consensus.

The Commonwealth of Dominica, located as we are in the hurricane belt, in an earthquake zone and in a volcanic region, particularly welcomes the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which we believe will significantly enhance the capacity of the United Nations to respond more effectively to the increasing frequency of natural disasters brought about by climate change and global warming. We, the Member States, now have an obligation to contribute to the building of the Fund, while at the same time taking steps to put in place measures to combat climate change and reduce our emission of greenhouse gases. Member States must be commended for the movement in a few important areas that will contribute to a revitalized United Nations. The first relates to progress in the area of Secretariat and management reforms, which we hope will contribute to greater transparency and accountability in United Nations operations. The second is the finalization on 26 August 2006 of the new treaty protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and I am pleased to announce that my Government is committed to signing and ratifying that treaty. We believe that that convention provides a solid basis for breaking down the discrimination directed towards people with disabilities.

The next area is the adoption by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006 of a United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Through this action, we have in a small way honoured the numerous victims of international terrorism and demonstrated our resolve to combat the scourge of terrorism wherever it exists. We must continue to work towards a counter-terrorism convention.

My country is continuing to make progress towards realization of the Millennium Development Goals, despite the many challenges with which it is confronted. In the aftermath of the devastation wreaked upon our economy by the rulings of the World Trade Organization disputes settlement mechanism, which resulted in the virtual dismantling of our banana industry, we had to undergo stringent fiscal adjustments to deal with unsustainable debt. The great sacrifices of the Dominican people resulted in modest economic growth and helped to consolidate our economic recovery. Spiralling oil prices, however, are seriously threatening the modest gains we have made. National effort is, therefore, focused on developing alternative, renewable energy sources, such as hydro, wind and geothermal.

Recent global events have not been encouraging. The collapse of the Doha Development Round further threatens to marginalize small island developing States like Dominica in the global trading system. Trade is one central element in the international agenda that can foster sustainable economic growth, reduce our dependence on declining aid and contribute to realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the development aspirations of the small vulnerable economies.

The global trading system must recognize, however, that there is no such thing as a level playing field, even among developing countries, as there are varying levels of size, vulnerability and development. There are large developing countries, there are small developing countries and there are very small developing countries. In addition, there are the least developed countries, which may be large or small. Where the very small developing countries are islands, their vulnerability is multiplied several fold. In addition to market access, therefore, small island developing States require increased development finance for trade and productive capacity enhancement combined with trade rules that are responsive to their development aspirations. In this regard, small vulnerable economies and the least developed countries urgently need a trading system that acknowledges their vulnerability and grants them the necessary special and differential treatment. This will ensure that they benefit from their participation in the global system and lead to greater equity and fairness in the process.

Increasingly, South-South cooperation has become vitally important to countries like the Commonwealth of Dominica, as the developed nations retreat from fulfilling their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their GNI for development assistance. South-South cooperation from China, Cuba, Libya, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela is contributing positively to our human resource development, revitalization of our infrastructure and implementation of our public sector investment programme. We believe that the developed countries can make a greater effort to assist us in realizing the commitments made under the Barbados Programme of Action and the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) understand the critical importance of deepening regional integration and that is why we agreed this year to move towards the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. That development, we believe, is an important pillar in maximizing regional trade and development and in minimizing the negative impact that is likely to be inflicted upon us, as small vulnerable economies, from the forces of globalization. We look forward to the support of the donor community in this important endeavour.

Good neighbourliness is an important plank in our foreign policy, and through this approach we seek to continuously build and strengthen relations with all the countries of the greater Caribbean Basin, including Cuba, the United States of America and Venezuela. We believe in harmonious and friendly relations with all our neighbours. We should not be expected to choose one over the other, but should be seen more as a bridge across the Caribbean Basin. Maritime and border disputes within our region, and particularly between CARICOM Member States and our neighbours in Central and South America, are best resolved in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation, using the good offices of the United Nations, the Organization of American States and other forums that can bring about resolution to such disputes.

The year 2007 will mark the bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the former British Empire. We anticipate a commemorative event in the General Assembly to mark this historic occasion. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Group of nations will table a resolution in the General Assembly to mark the occasion and expects the support of all Member States of the United Nations in this regard.

We welcome the return to constitutional government in Haiti, the first country to declare its independence from colonialism and slavery. We commit ourselves to work closely with President René Garcia Préval and his Government in their development efforts. We also welcome the recent announcement of commitments to Haiti by the Government of the United States of $492 million over three years, and by the Government of Canada in the amount of $100 million annually. We appreciate greatly the many pledges of assistance for Haiti's reconstruction from various bilateral and multilateral donors and wish to emphasize the necessity for these pledges to be disbursed on a timely basis to provide the Haitian Government with the capacity to bring about improvements in the physical and social infrastructure of the country and the quality of life of the people of this CARICOM member State.

The situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Darfur, and the Middle East continue to occupy our attention. Regarding the unfortunate devastation caused by the war between Israel and Hizbollah, we believe that Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) is a good basis for a future peaceful relationship between Israel and Lebanon, and we urge both countries and the neighbouring States to abide by the provisions of that resolution. The Commonwealth of Dominica has stated before in this forum that the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel, both with secure and defensible borders recognized by the international community.

The situation in Darfur is very troubling and the international community must take action now. We commend the African Union for renewing the mandate of the African Union Peacekeeping Force, and urge the Sudanese Government to reconsider its opposition to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force to bolster the efforts of the African Union to provide protection and security for the people of Darfur, which is a prerequisite for a lasting solution to the underlying problems giving rise to the state of conflict.

In conclusion, let me express my delegation's wish for a successful sixty-first session under

Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa's leadership. It is our hope that the development agenda will once again assume the highest priority of the General Assembly and that we can more effectively promote peace and security, eradicate terrorism, and above all promote poverty alleviation. We must also focus on moving forward with the reform agenda of the United Nations system, including Security Council and Economic and Social Council reform. We can prevail if we act responsibly and together. Support for multilateralism and the ideals of the United Nations must remain our priority.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ismael Mohamoud Hurreh, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Hurreh (Somalia): It gives me great pleasure to know that a sister from fraternal Bahrain is presiding over this important session of the General Assembly. Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa's leadership will certainly contribute to promoting dialogue and harmony in the midst of the spread of conflicts throughout the different corners of the world. We are confident that she will successfully guide the deliberations of the Assembly.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay special tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his commitment and diplomatic skill, which enabled him to effectively manage the deliberations of the Assembly. We likewise wish to recognize Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the immense efforts undertaken and the commendable services rendered during his tenure in promoting the maintenance of peace and security and international cooperation.

I wish at the outset to brief this Assembly in some detail on the current situation in Somalia. The establishment of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia was the result of the successful peace and reconciliation process held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2004, and created a unique opportunity for ending the Somali political crisis. The Somali people were overjoyed that a comprehensive settlement of the conflict had finally been reached.

The advancement and consolidation of peace and stability requires the unwavering commitment of the international community to reinforce the Transitional Federal Government's national efforts in nation-building. Regrettably, owing to circumstances not fully understood by us, the international community failed to act in a timely fashion to support the new Government in facing the enormous challenges it confronted. Consequently, a window of opportunity has been lost, which has led to continued violence and conflict.

Ironically, the international community's failure to act also paved the way for the warlords and other armed groups to take advantage of a political vacuum, as they asserted and consolidated their power and clan-based authority in the capital city, Mogadishu, and its environs.

Although they had the privilege of holding important ministerial portfolios in the new Government, the warlords pursued their hidden agenda to promote their personal interests and political ambitions by maintaining the chaotic status quo in Somalia.

It is noteworthy to bear in mind that the warlords and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) had initially combined their forces and political rhetoric as an opposition alliance group against the Transitional Federal Government. Both groups were encouraged by the reluctance of the international community to come quickly to the aid of the new Somali Government and by the continuation of the United Nations arms embargo against Somalia. However, the ICU soon realized that the warlords were losing popularity among mainstream Somalis.

At this juncture, the Transitional Federal Government, though sceptical, responded positively to the initiative undertaken by the League of Arab States to convene peace talks and settle the differences between the parties. The first and second rounds of those peace talks have successfully taken place in Khartoum, and both sides have agreed on general principles and some preliminary issues for the next round of talks scheduled to be held in Khartoum in October 2006.

However, as the Islamic Courts Union continued to rush to consolidate their grip, their concealed intentions are fast becoming evident to the Somali people and to the international community. In this connection, it will be recalled that the ICU continued with impunity to expand and attack other districts outside Mogadishu including Jowhar, Balad, and other adjacent areas. The latest development of the ICU's territorial expansion was the ill-advised armed attack and seizure of the city of Kismayo, in flagrant violation of the Khartoum Peace Agreement.

It should also be noted that the President of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, Mr. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, survived a targeted assassination attempt on 18 September 2006. My Government firmly believes that this heinous crime is an act of terrorism aimed at undermining and sabotaging the peace process in Somalia and should be condemned in the strongest terms. This heinous attack resulted in the death of several people, including the brother of the President. We wish to express our appreciation to all those delegations and organizations that expressed their sympathy and condemned this act.

These developments are all disquieting and disturbing, and the situation is deteriorating to an alarming degree and at a rapid pace. It continues to pose a serious threat to the peace that has been achieved, which has serious implications for the security and stability of the region.

Despite all these violations of the Peace Agreement, the Transitional Federal Government remains committed to the path of dialogue and negotiation with the ICU and relevant civil society organizations. But this positive attitude will not continue if the ICU persists in its aggressive policies of attacks and territorial expansion.

As I stated earlier, the absence of law and order, the escalation of violence and the ensuing collapse of central authority were the major causes for the chaos and anarchy in Somalia. The main goal of the Transitional Federal Government is therefore to engage in an effective, focused plan for the re-establishment of institutions for peace and good governance in order to restore normalcy and stability in the country. We therefore strongly appeal to the international community to demonstrate a political will and a commitment to redouble its efforts to provide political, financial and technical support to the Transitional Federal Government during this challenging transitional period.

It goes without saying that the absence of effective, functioning government institutions capable of enforcing law and order has been the underlying cause of the Somali conflict for the past 14 years. At this crucial juncture, what Somalia urgently needs is immediate and substantial support for the creation of an environment conducive to peace and security which in essence is the key requirement for reconstruction and economic recovery.

The economic challenges facing the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia are formidable. The collapse of the Somali State in 1991 resulted in extensive destruction of governing and management institutions which are now being re-established by the Transitional Federal Government in its post-conflict reconstruction programmes.

It is deeply disturbing to note that over half a million children under the age of five die each year from preventable diseases, malaria being the biggest killer. Moreover, over 100,000 women die each year from complications in pregnancy and childbirth. Despite all these hardships, the Transitional Federal Government's economic and social recovery programmes have received virtually no assistance from international donors and certainly none commensurate with the massive needs of the Somali people. For far too long, Somalia was allowed to struggle alone and the negative consequences have been monumental.

Somalia can aspire to establish the sufficient conditions for sustained economic growth by leveraging its energetic human and social capital. However, a successful and sustainable reconstruction and development programme requires the international community's support of the Transitional Federal Government's determined efforts to wield administrative authority and develop competence at the federal, regional and district levels. This situation calls for a broad-based participatory partnership approach from the family of nations and for the provision of technical assistance in the building of efficient institutions that leverage the resiliency and potential of the Somali people.

In terms of required relief assistance, it is to be noted that approximately 1.8 million Somalis are still in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and livelihood support. In view of the magnitude of this challenge, my delegation appeals to the world body and the donor community to respond positively, generously and, above all, concertedly in order to meet Somalia's humanitarian needs and avert a catastrophe of major proportions.

In an effort to stabilize Somalia and overcome the sources of insecurity, the Government has put in place a well-marshalled National Security and Stabilization Plan. Both in concept and execution, the plan takes a holistic approach to the nature and scope of insecurity in the country. For its implementation, the plan takes

into consideration local, regional and international dimensions. Accordingly, it envisions the combined and concerted local, regional and international efforts in its execution. However, the realization of this plan remains elusive insofar as the Government is fragile and incapable of enforcing the policies and laws of the land pursuant to the Transitional Federal Charter.

The Transitional Federal Government welcomes all efforts now being undertaken by the international community in addressing the new problems and realities of Somalia. It is important to note that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union have now finalized the details and salient elements of the IGAD Peace Support Mission in Somalia. At the international level, it is also gratifying that the International Contact Group on Somalia, which was recently established, convened its second meeting in Brussels to find ways and means to streamline the international engagement and support for Somalia. Moreover, on its part, the United Nations Security Council is in the process of considering Somalia's security problems, in particular the lifting of the United Nations arms embargo and the deployment of IGASOM to Somalia.

All these combined activities at the regional and international levels demonstrate the heightened interest and attention given to Somalia. However, it remains to be seen whether all these initiatives can be properly coordinated and directed towards substantially assisting the Transitional Federal Government in its daunting task of stabilizing the country. To be meaningful and effective, the contributions of the international community must focus, as a matter of priority, on the fundamental issue of capacity-building for the Transitional Federal Government institutions, particularly in the security sector.

It is imperative that the following specific measures be taken as a matter of urgency:

First, the United Nations arms embargo must be favourably reviewed and lifted by the Security Council. Secondly, the IGAD Peace Support Mission should be deployed as mandated by the African Union and IGAD. Thirdly, the National Security Forces must be institutionalized, trained and equipped. Fourthly, the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Programme must be undertaken throughout Somalia.

It is also of paramount importance that a solid basis for the Somali public administration be established and that a modest and lean civil service be recruited and trained for the various public sector organs of the State. Regional administrations should be put in place and federal restructuring drawn and implemented in conformity with the Transitional Federal Charter. Finally, immediate efforts should be exerted for the drafting of the permanent federal constitution of Somalia so as to pave the way for free and fair elections after the completion of the transitional period.

These proposals are aimed at restoring peace and stability in order to assist the Transitional Federal Government in establishing functioning and effective institutions capable of providing essential basic services to the people. Failure to do so would once again relegate Somalia to yet another cycle of violence and anarchy.

We share the desire expressed by many delegations in this forum to see the United Nations reinvigorate its role and strengthen its capabilities with a view to becoming more active and effective. It could then guarantee the fulfilment of the objectives and principles that are enshrined in the Charter, so as to ensure that peace on earth and international cooperation will continue to prevail for the welfare of mankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kenzo Oshima, chairman of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I wish to congratulate Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her assumption of the presidency of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, and I wish her every success. I would also like to pay high tribute to the past President, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his outstanding leadership during the last session. Japan's sincere thanks also go to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his dedication and many achievements in leading the work of the Organization over the past decade.

Japan congratulates the Republic of Montenegro on its accession to the United Nations as its 192nd Member.

Fifty years ago, in December 1956, from this very podium, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mamoru Shigemitsu, expressed the nation's great honour and delight at becoming the eightieth Member

of the United Nations and declared Japan's firm determination to contribute to the high goals of this Organization.

Since then, Japan, as a nation committed to peace, has worked hard in promoting disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, supporting the undertakings of the United Nations for peace and stability in the world such as the peacekeeping operations, and contributing to world development and prosperity. The Japanese people take pride in the contributions they have made over the years to the United Nations.

The challenges we face today differ significantly from those of 50 years ago. Yet, the common goals of humanity that the United Nations has strived for — peace, development and human rights — remain unchanged. Japan reaffirms the commitment it made at the time of its accession, and, building on its experiences since then, will rededicate its efforts to achieve those goals.

As Member States, we are responsible, not only for the actions we take, but also for our inaction. Within the United Nations, it is the Security Council that bears the responsibility of delivering swift and decisive action in the face of a crisis. This summer, the ability of the international community to mount a collective response through the Security Council was tested on several occasions. Let me cite three major events on which the Council acted: the ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran's nuclear-related problem and the conflict in Lebanon.

After the launch of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 4 July, the Security Council, in a unanimous decision in resolution 1695 (2006), sent a firm message, on behalf of the entire international community, condemning that reprehensible act. In accordance with that resolution, all Member States are now required to take concrete action as specified therein, and call strongly on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to implement the resolution, fully and without delay. In that connection, Japan introduced on 19 September a set of measures for the prevention of the transfer of financial resources to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in addition to the long-standing strict export control measures.

Furthermore, Japan will continue to make its utmost efforts so that the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the abduction issue will be resolved comprehensively and in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration of 2002.

With regard to Iran's nuclear issue, it is our belief that the adoption of resolution 1696 (2006) will serve as an important step towards a peaceful settlement of the issue through diplomatic negotiations. Japan strongly urges Iran to comply fully with the resolution by promptly suspending all enrichment-related activities, and to return to the negotiation process.

Concerning the recent crisis in Lebanon, Japan welcomes the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) by the Security Council and supports the efforts under way for its implementation. At the same time, the protracted negotiating process for that resolution reminded us once again of the importance of the ability of the Council to respond, swiftly as well as comprehensively, in such a crisis situation. That is never an easy task, but one we must always strive to fulfil.

In response to some of the recent events affecting international peace and security, the Council succeeded in arriving at concrete decisions for the Member States to act upon. Japan is pleased to have played a proactive role in that process as a member of the Council, and we intend to cooperate closely with other Member States in following up on those resolutions.

In countries and regions emerging from conflict, the key to realizing sustainable peace and prosperity lies in the consolidation of peace and laying the foundations for nation-building. It is encouraging to see the ongoing, concerted efforts of the international community towards peace consolidation and nation-building in a number of countries and regions.

Iraq is one such country. Though currently still in the grip of great hardship, we have every confidence that Iraq will overcome the difficulties and develop as a democratic and stable State, and prosper as a responsible member of the international community. The International Compact for Iraq, which aims at forging a new mode of partnership between Iraq and the international community, will help accelerate the country's reconstruction. Japan intends to fully take part in those international endeavours.

In Afghanistan, Japan has also been an active supporter and a leading donor for its reconstruction and development. We have led the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts in collaboration with the United Nations, and, upon the successful completion of the DDR process, are now taking the lead in the projects for the disbanding of illegal armed groups.

With regard to Timor-Leste, Japan hopes that the newly established United Nations mission will effectively support the country's nation-building efforts. As the lead country on Timor-Leste in the Security Council, Japan will continue to take the initiative to promote peace and stability and achieve the early restoration of law and order in that country.

In Africa, as a whole, we begin to see the situation on the continent moving towards less conflict and greater peace. The ministerial conference on the consolidation of peace, that was held under the framework of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in February this year, not only made an intellectual contribution to the understanding of peace consolidation, but also strengthened the will and solidarity of the African States for peacebuilding. Japan, for its part, has been expanding assistance for the consolidation of peace in Africa, with particular focus on the Sudan, the Great Lakes region and West Africa.

Against such a backdrop, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission represents a significant milestone in the history of the United Nations. We must ensure that the Commission's work is translated into tangible, practical value-added support to peacebuilding efforts in countries recovering from conflict and that it thus helps to make a difference on the ground. Burundi and Sierra Leone, the first two countries on the agenda of the Commission, will provide test cases, in which we must not fail. Japan has contributed $20 million to the Peacebuilding Fund and intends to contribute actively to the work of the Commission.

Post-conflict peacebuilding requires knowledge and expertise in a wide range of fields, including ceasefire monitoring, refugee assistance, administrative and judicial institution-building, and reconstruction and development. Our experts have been working in Asian countries to assist their peacebuilding efforts, such as the establishment of legal and judicial systems. In order to strengthen our cooperation in this area even further, we are now considering concrete measures to train civilians not only from Japan but also from other Asian countries. We envisage that, one day, civilian practitioners who have been trained in my country will find themselves working side by side as fellow Asian peacebuilders, including, for example, in Africa.

Regional conflicts continue to pose serious challenges. In addition, the Secretary-General, as he pointed out earlier from this rostrum, is concerned about "those who seem eager to foment a new war of religion" (A/61/PV.10). While poverty remains the main scourge in many developing countries, globalization has also brought to the fore transnational issues such as terrorism, infectious diseases and environmental degradation. It is clear that the international community still has a long way to go to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In tackling these issues, a spirit of tolerance, compassion and closer international cooperation is indispensable, and a strengthened United Nations must be at the centre of the concerted efforts of the international community. At the same time, new concepts should also propel these efforts. Japan has advocated the importance of human security as a concept that stresses the protection of individuals from threats to their life and dignity, as well as the value of their individual empowerment. Together with other interested countries, we will promote human security and the approach based on it during this General Assembly session.

Along with human security, respect for the ownership of developing countries, based on good governance, should be a pillar underpinning the strategy for reducing poverty through economic growth. Given these principles, Japan intends to enhance its development assistance to achieve the MDGs, by faithfully implementing the commitments made last year to increase the volume of its official development assistance (ODA) by $10 billion over a period of five years and to double its ODA to Africa over a period of three years. On trade, Japan will do its utmost to bring about the early resumption and successful conclusion of the WTO Doha Development Round negotiations.

Close international cooperation is vital in our fight against terrorism. In this regard, Japan welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution

60/288) and calls for the early conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Health is another area in which Japan has worked extensively in cooperation with the international community, including efforts against avian and pandemic influenza and HIV/AIDS. Japan recognizes the importance of the activities of the World Health Organization and will further strengthen its cooperation with that organization, particularly in Africa.

As is often emphasized, peace, development and human rights are linked and complement one another. Japan's own experience in the 60 years since the Second World War is eloquent testimony to this fact. We have high expectations for the newly created Human Rights Council and look to it to open a new page in the promotion of respect for human rights. As a member, Japan will play a constructive role in the Council. Japan also supports the early adoption of the draft conventions on enforced disappearance and on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

The United Nations has heavy responsibilities, in today's and tomorrow's world, as an indispensable global instrument for resolving conflicts, building peace, addressing emerging global threats and laying the foundation for prosperity. To fulfil such a mission, it must be efficient and effective, as well as accountable and broadly representative in its decisions and operations. Reform of the Organization's structure and the manner in which it functions is, therefore, critically important. In September last year, leaders expressed their resolve to achieve comprehensive reform of this universal body. One year on, some encouraging progress has been made, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. However, reform of the Security Council remains outstanding on the institutional reform agenda.

Perhaps a limited few may find it in their interest to leave the Security Council configured in the way it was in 1945. It is clear, however, that no one stands to gain from the waning credibility that failure to reform could entail. The call for a more effective, representative and transparent Council that can meet the demands of the new century is not mere rhetoric; it is real and urgent. An overwhelming majority of the Member States, including Japan, agree that the international community should approach and carry out reform with a sense of urgency, and Japan is determined to continue to take the initiative in this critical endeavour. The Member States now need a new proposal on Security Council reform — one that is both creative and persuasive — in order to take an early decision during the current session of the General Assembly. At the same time, other important areas for reform must also be addressed. We need concrete results in management reform if we are to demonstrate that the United Nations is capable of reforming itself. It is also our hope that there will be a constructive dialogue on the question of United Nations system-wide coherence, based on the report of the High-level Panel to be issued later this year.

In this connection, I would also remind the Member States that world leaders resolved last year to delete the long-obsolete "enemy State" clauses from the United Nations Charter. This is another indication that the United Nations is ready to step out of the past and into the new era.

Having made a significant contribution to the activities of the United Nations since its inception, Japan has an exemplary record with regard to the fulfilment of its duties as a Member State, including assessed contributions. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that the United Nations needs a reformed scale-of-assessments structure — one that is more equitable and fair and duly takes into account the status and responsibilities of each Member State. Japan will work together with other Member States to formulate such a structure, which will bring financial stability to this Organization.

Our common task for the sixty-first session is to continue our work and translate the decisions on reform made at the World Summit into reality. Let us join forces once again and create an efficient and effective United Nations, so that Member States can better respond to the aspirations and expectations of the international community for a better future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, chairperson of the delegation of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for the honour of speaking from this high rostrum and to convey on behalf of Turkmenistan's President, Saparmurat Niyazov, the best wishes for peace, well-

being and prosperity to all the peoples of all countries. Permit me also to congratulate Madam Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the lofty and responsible post of President and wish her success in guiding the fruitful work of the sixty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Neutral Turkmenistan, which marks the fifteenth anniversary of its independence this year, builds its relations in the international arena upon the principles of equal rights and mutually beneficial cooperation with all States and international organizations. Cooperation with the United Nations holds a special place in Turkmenistan's international relations. Turkmenistan welcomes constructive interaction among members of the community of nations in elaborating new and effective approaches aimed at preserving and maintaining security and stability in the world and at achieving the objectives of sustainable development of countries and peoples.

During the more than 10 years that have passed since the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan on 12 December 1995, our State has demonstrated in practice the fundamental nature of peace-loving and humanist principles that have formed the basis of Turkmenistan's policy since the day it acquired its independence.

I would like to avail this opportunity to express, on behalf of Turkmenistan's President, our appreciation to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his support of Turkmenistan's foreign policy and for his tireless efforts for the welfare of the world.

Today we quite rightly can state that Turkmenistan, as a neutral State, has been unswervingly fulfilling its international obligations. Through its actions, our country demonstrates its adherence to peace, cooperation, non-accession to alliances and military blocs, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for their sovereignty and their right to their own paths of development.

It is on the basis of peace, humanism and mutual respect of interests that Turkmenistan approaches issues of international cooperation, giving top priority to interaction with the United Nations and its structures in the strategic areas of partnership. There is no disputing the fact that the United Nations has been and continues to be the largest and most prestigious international Organization that has been entrusted with the coordinating role in world affairs and on which humankind pins its hopes for peaceful development.

Turkmenistan welcomes efforts by the United Nations, the General Assembly and the Security Council aimed at achieving goals of sustainable development, as well as meeting the challenges set by the 2005 Summit, which determined how the world community should address the most pressing problems affecting stability, humanitarian issues and strengthening and improving the work of the United Nations.

We believe that the tangible results of the collective efforts aimed at finding the best ways for the United Nations to proceed include such practical steps as the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, creation of the Human Rights Council and other constructive steps. Improvement in the work of the Security Council is clearly one of the most important elements in completing the reform of the Organization. We firmly believe that it is essential to carry out this task; it is made necessary because of the objective processes of international development, increasing interaction among States and increased need for combining regional and global problems.

The United Nations is the most important international structure, where comprehensive account has to be taken of all factors underlying the processes in the world. Turkmenistan advocates strengthening the role of the United Nations and its major bodies, when decisions concerning the most pressing problems of today are taken.

In this context, our country supports expansion of Security Council membership on the basis of the greatest possible agreement among United Nations Member States. We also support initiating more effective and constructive dialogue between the Security Council and the General Assembly. We believe that progress will continue in the reforms started at the United Nations. Turkmenistan also welcomes expansion of the number of States represented in United Nations structures and institutions, while emphasizing the importance of geographical distribution; this is in line with the basic values of our Organization.

Turkmenistan's steadfast position is that it favours strengthening the United Nations in the international arena as the highest international forum

for establishing a just and humane world order. Turkmenistan fundamentally advocates increasing the peacebuilding potential of the Organization, in accordance with the realities of global development. Therefore, our country devotes great attention to maintaining most close contacts with offices of United Nations specialized agencies, whose importance is continually growing today.

One of Turkmenistan's main achievements since independence has been the primacy of the principle whereby each nation has the right to chose its own path of development and acceptable form of State system. This is an essential condition for stability and sustainable and progressive development in all spheres of society. Today, independent and neutral Turkmenistan is confidently advancing along its chosen path. Annually, our country's economic growth surpasses 20 per cent, with the volume of production per capita exceeding $8,000.

Turkmenistan is celebrating its 15th anniversary as a State that has guaranteed its own food independence. It provides its people with free natural gas, electricity, water, salt and low, in fact, symbolic prices for bread, utilities and public transport services, gasoline and so forth. All this is a tangible result of the long-term programme of social and economic reform carried out in our country under the leadership of the Head of the nation. Under this programme, over 60 per cent of the State budget is allocated to social spending.

As a democratic State based on the rule of law, Turkmenistan is unwaveringly implementing the highest principles allowing people to express their will. In this regard, the Turkmen people possess a vast historical experience of democratic traditions, which are organically and progressively finding their way today into the social and political life of the country and are reflected in the continual enjoyment by citizens of their constitutional rights and freedoms. In this respect, 2006 was a significant year for Turkmenistan. In accordance with the decision of the highest representative body of Government, the People's Council, our country held elections to local self-government on an open, democratic and competitive basis. As of now, this practice is being implemented at other levels of Government. In this, we see the basis for consistent and irreversible processes of democratization, with the ever-increasing involvement of citizens and public organizations in managing the country. In Turkmenistan, this process is advancing in a natural way, thereby instilling in the people the sense that they are masters of their land and that they are responsible for their destiny and the destiny of their country.

In terms of preserving peace and security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most acute problems on today's global agenda. Our country fully supports efforts by the world community in this area and participates in their implementation, both at the national and international levels. We are taking concrete, practical steps in this direction.

It should be especially emphasized that, at the end of October 2005, the People's Council of Turkmenistan adopted a Declaration in support of the initiatives of international organizations against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Also, on 8 September, Turkmenistan, together with other States of the region, signed a treaty creating a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

By these actions, our country is demonstrating in practice its firm commitment to the processes of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this connection we pledge our readiness to implement the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan — which was supported by the United Nations Secretary-General — to establish a United Nations regional centre for preventive diplomacy in Central Asia. All the necessary conditions and appropriate infrastructure are already available in the capital of our State — Ashgabat.

The President returned to the Chair.

Turkmenistan has demonstrated its existing potential and capabilities through its active cooperation with the United Nations in organizing major international forums and conferences to discuss pressing problems involving global and regional issues.

Through practical multilateral dialogue we have become convinced that the prevention of potential conflicts requires early warning of emerging situations, a broad-based analysis and elaboration of preventive strategies. Therefore, Turkmenistan will continue to make its contribution to improving multilateral cooperation in this important area in partnership with the United Nations and its organs, while recognizing the great importance of international experience in preventive diplomacy.

Turkmenistan is a principled and determined participant in the struggle against the threat of terrorism. We regard terrorism in all its forms as a phenomenon that must be placed outside the framework of human civilization. We are convinced that in order to combat terrorism today we need the cooperation of all States, including with regard to such important issues as cooperation in the search for and extradition of the organizers and participants of terrorist acts, as well as their collaborators.

Turkmenistan fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General in elaborating a global strategy in the fight against terrorism and stands ready to provide practical assistance to the international community in its efforts in that direction.

The United Nations is a unique reflection of actual changes occurring in the world and it has clearly demonstrated the will and desire of States for cooperation within a stable environment. The strategic direction of reforms and the chosen path towards qualitative improvement in the work of the community of nations has become the defining vector of those changes.

Turkmenistan views the reform of the United Nations as a road map towards the further strengthening and enhancement of its authority. We are convinced that the United Nations has always been and remains the most universal international structure and the most important guarantor of global stability, security and development. Turkmenistan will continue to cooperate more closely with the United Nations in the future with a view to helping it to fully display its enormous potential.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. Several representatives have requested to exercise their right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Bhutan.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): My delegation would like to respond to the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal on 25 September 2006, on the issue of the people in the refugee camps in Eastern Nepal.

The statement that there is unwillingness on the part of Bhutan to resolve the problem is totally false. The Royal Government of Bhutan is committed to resolving the problem through a bilateral process with the Government of Nepal, and our actions to date clearly demonstrate that commitment. The bilateral process was very close to a solution for the Kudanabari camp, where the people had been classified into four agreed categories. It is untenable of the Nepalese Government to say that Bhutan is unwilling to find a resolution.

The international community is well aware of the difficult political situation that Nepal has been in for the last many years. The bilateral process has suffered delays and disruptions as the result of frequent changes of Government in Nepal and resulting changes in that Government's position. During recent meetings, the current Government in Nepal has introduced a new element, stating that the problem is between Bhutan and the camp people, and not between Bhutan and Nepal, and that Bhutan should talk directly to the people. The new Government of Nepal has even stated in the press that it would not abide by the past agreements reached between the two Governments.

The Royal Government will, under no circumstance, conduct a dialogue with the people in the camps, as their leaders have committed seditious and criminal offences. The camps have been infiltrated by Maoist elements and several radical parties have been formed, which have declared the objective of carrying out armed struggle to overthrow the Royal Government of Bhutan. Moreover, it was the Nepalese Government that opened the camps in Nepal and sought assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1991, when there were only 304 people claiming to be refugees from Bhutan. Until mid-1993, all ethnic Nepalese claiming to be Bhutanese refugees were admitted into the camps without proper screening. Therefore, Nepal has both a moral and legal responsibility for the problem. The bilateral process is threatened by Nepal's current position, which would mean going back on all of the agreements reached between the two Governments and undoing all that has been achieved in the past 13 years.

During our most recent meeting with the Government of Nepal in New York, on 20 September 2006, the Bhutanese delegation conveyed to the Nepalese delegation that the Royal Government of

Bhutan is firmly committed to the bilateral process and that the only way forward is to implement the agreements that have been reached through arduous negotiations over many years. My delegation would like to reiterate that commitment and urges the Government of Nepal to do likewise.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): Thank you for allowing us to exercise our right of reply. My comments are related to the statement of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning. First, we firmly believe that the qualifications of a given country for permanent membership in the Security Council should be judged based on that country's contribution to the purpose of the United Nations, in particular, to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Secondly, regarding the issues of the past, the position of the Government of Japan has been clearly expressed on a number of occasions, including in the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration of 2002, in the statement of the former Prime Minister at the Asian-African Summit in Bandung, Indonesia in 2005 and in his statement on 15 August 2002 commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the second World War. I refrain from repeating those statements, but the fact remains that, as the Permanent Representative of Japan expressed in his statement in the general debate just 20 minutes ago, Japan has been a peace-loving nation and has continuously contributed to the goals of the United Nations through a variety of means since it joined this organization fifty years ago.

Mr. Sin Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): In his statement, the representative of Japan proceeded to cover up Japan's ambition to repeat its aggression against Korea by criticizing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Throughout the statement, my delegation felt that threats in the North-East Asia region are coming from Japan. The threats from Japan are as follows.

The first threat is Japan's distortion and embellishment of its crime-ridden history. The denial and distortion of aggression and crimes against humanity committed in the past are intended as a means to revive these evils again. Today, Japan's ultra-right-wing conservative authorities are attempting to turn Japan's entire society to the right, to speed up militarization and to legitimize its overseas aggression by amending the constitution. Rampant incitement to hatred and antagonism against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as terror against Korean residents in Japan and their organization — which is called Chongryon — show that the threat of mew aggression from Japan has now become a reality.

Another threat posed by Japan is that, as a junior ally and servant of the United States, Japan is executing the United States policy of aggression against Asia. Japan thereby seeks to realize its ambition to commit aggression against Korea by availing itself of the United States Asia strategy. All of Japan's manoeuvres against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are undertaken on the instructions from the United States and stem from Japan's deceitful and cunning intention to realize its purposes with the help of its master, namely, the United States.

The Korean people have a deep-seated grudge against Japan that must be paid off with blood. During the more than 40 years of its occupation of Korea, Japan forcibly drafted and abducted 8.4 million Koreans, and forced military sexual slavery on 200,000 women and girls. Even today, after more than half a century, we do not know the whereabouts of most of those victims. Japanese authorities who make a fuss about human rights and the rule of law are not giving a sincere and coherent response about the fate of those victims; nor are they apologizing or compensating honestly for their past crimes against humanity.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is highly vigilant as to the threats posed by Japan in cooperation with the United States. Fully conscious of its responsibility to the history and destiny of its people and its responsibility for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, as well as in Asia and the Pacific region, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is speeding up its full preparedness to resolutely counter any threats from Japan.

I would like to conclude my intervention by reiterating that Japan is dangerous because, while it is rich in wealth, it is very poor in terms of morality and ethics.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply once again in response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is very unfortunate that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea refers to the issues of the past. Although it was not my intention to take the floor,

my delegation is compelled to respond briefly to the points that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has raised.

With regard to the problems of the past, I stated in my previous intervention that Japan has repeated many times — at the highest institutional and political levels — that this issue has been settled. We are of the view that that should be taken into consideration.

My delegation would like to remind the Assembly that, in the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, issued on 19 September 2005 in Beijing, both Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea committed themselves to take steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration and on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and outstanding issues of concern. Based on that commitment, Japan is ready to discuss the settlement of the past, as well as other outstanding issues, in bilateral talks between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. My delegation would like to stress the importance of both parties expressing themselves in a constructive and sincere manner in the bilateral talks, so as to improve relations.

With regard to the point that has been raised pertaining to past humanitarian issues, the Government of Japan is sincerely confronting the fact that many people were in an "unfortunate situation" in the past, and has expressed its deep remorse and heartfelt apologies. However, the numbers that have been put forth by the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are greatly exaggerated, and we cannot accept them.

With regard to problem of outstanding issues between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, my delegation would once again like to point out that the Pyongyang Declaration calls for those issues to be settled bilaterally. That also should of course be taken into consideration.

My delegation would also like to point out that, as our Permanent Representative mentioned just 20 or 30 minutes ago, in the more than 50 years of its membership of the United Nations, Japan has been a peace-loving country that has contributed to international peace and security. Of course, Japan has also promoted and strengthened regional peace and security in our part of the world. That is a fact about which almost every country Member of the United Nations is aware.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.